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ABSTRACT

This report describes the strategies of a young accrediting association in identifying, developing, and implementing a training program designed to help chairpersons and team members prepare for, and participate in, a school accreditation visit. The problem arose when the National Accreditation Commission of the Association of Christian Schools International determined that the schools would be better served if the accreditation program became more regionalized and the regional commission had more direct control over the program. A preliminary analysis indicated that the training program provided for both chairpersons and team members had been insufficient and ineffective. Chairpersons relied on their own background of accreditation experience and team members were receiving dissimilar instructions because there was no prescribed training program. Research revealed that most team members lacked adequate knowledge of the association's standards and policies. The study included a critical review of all past records and documents, including previous accreditation visits and team reports, a survey of former team members, a literature review, and interviews with knowledgeable accreditation experts. As a result of this study, the association's policies, standards, and procedures for accreditation were documented; a training program was developed; and a chairperson's manual was prepared that contained forms and instructions for all stages of the process, including guidelines for writing a team report and a sample team report. (Appendices listed in the table of contents are not included with this document.) Included are 47 references. (MLH)

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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEAM VISITS THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR CHAIRPERSONS AND TEAM MEMBERS

BY

JOHN SCHIMMER, JR.

MARP Report

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by

* John Schimmer, Jr.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the National Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders

Nova University

Major Applied Research Project
Dallas Cluster IVD
September 19, 1989

* Regional Director
Association of Christian Schools
International
Dallas, Texas
(214) 991-2822 (office)
(214) 247-6558 (home)

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: John Schimmer, Jr.
DATE: September 1989
CLUSTER: Dallas IV D
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TITLE: Improving the Quality of the Team Visits Through the Development of a Training Program for Chairpersons and Team Members

ABSTRACT: This study describes the strategies of a young accrediting association in identifying, developing, and implementing a training program designed to assist chairpersons and team members prepare for, and participate in, a school accreditation visit. The problem arose when the National Accreditation Commission of the Association of Christian Schools International determined that the schools would be better served if the accreditation program became more regionalized and the regional commission had more direct control over the program.

An analysis of the problem indicated that the training provided for chairpersons, and subsequently for team members, had been insufficient and ineffective. Chairpersons relied on their own background of experience in accreditation and team members were receiving dissimilar instructions because there was no prescribed training program. Research also revealed that the majority of team members had less than adequate knowledge of the association's standards and policies.

The study included a critical review of all past records and documents including previous accreditation visits and team reports, a survey of former team members, a review of the literature, and interviews with knowledgeable experts in the field of accreditation.

As a result of this study the association's policies, standards and procedures for accreditation were documented, a training program was developed for chairpersons and team members, and a chairpersons manual was prepared containing forms and instructions for all stages of the process including guidelines for writing a team report, and a sample team report.

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Chapter One

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

The Problem

Accreditation has been accepted by educators as one of the major programs for assisting schools in their quest for excellence. Any program designed to help schools achieve excellence must be an example of excellence. Discrepancies in the process will mar the very image it is expected to project.

The Association of Christian Schools International needed to embark on a study and a program to improve the quality of the on-campus team visit when evaluating a school for the purpose of accreditation. As a prelude to this study the introductory practicum identified weaknesses in the present program and initiated steps to rectify problem areas, including the development of a training program for chairpersons and team members. The results have been evaluated and the process of developing new training materials continued through the Major Applied Research Practicum.

The Immediate Problem Context

The Association of Christian Schools International has ten offices strategically located across the United States and Canada. The South-Central regional office in Dallas serves the states of Texas, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. One of the major services provided

by the South-Central region is school accreditation. Each region has an accreditation commission which is responsible for managing the program within the policies and guidelines established by the National Accreditation Commission.

The practicum manager serves as the South-Central Regional Director and is a member of the Regional Accreditation Commission. The director has the responsibility for developing and refining the accreditation program, recruiting personnel to serve on accreditation teams, and the training of chairpersons. The chairperson, in turn, trains the team members.

The ACSI accreditation program is in its infancy. The first school to achieve accreditation within the region did so in September, 1983. Though specifically designed to evaluate private Christian schools, the program is in competition with, and frequently compared with, the accreditation programs offered by the state departments of education, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), and the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS). Consequently, the ACSI program must be of sufficient quality to compete in this market. In 1987, the program was granted full recognition in Texas. This means that the State Department of Education recognizes ACSI accredited schools as being fully accredited and equivalent to state accredited schools. Such recognition will eventually be sought in the other states within the region, but such efforts have been placed "on hold" until the completion of the MARP, in order to gain full benefit from the study and consequently demonstrate a stronger program when

seeking other recognitions. The same applies to efforts which were underway to develop cooperative visitation procedures with SACS and NCA. Eventually this should allow member schools seeking dual accreditation to use the ACSI self-study instrument and have one visiting team represent both accrediting associations.

The Setting Germane to the Problem

The Association is headquartered in Whittier, California. Founded in 1978, it now serves more than 2500 member schools in North America and on several other continents. The majority of member schools are in the United States. Each regional director reports directly to an Executive Director and to a National Board of Directors.

The accreditation program is national in scope but regional in practice. The National Accreditation Commission establishes the standards for accreditation, develops the major policies, and gives broad direction and supervision to the program. The Commission depends upon the regional commissions and the regional directors to implement the program. A change in leadership at the national commission level has resulted in more direct control being delegated to the regional offices and commissions.

ACSI is a member of the American Christian Consortium for Education and Accreditation. This is a group of accrediting associations seeking recognition and approval of the U.S. Office of Education. The practicum manager represents ACSI by serving as a member of the consortium commission, and also as a member

of the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC).

Regional and National Context of the Problem

The training of personnel to serve on accreditation teams is an on-going need for all accrediting agencies. The degree of emphasis will vary according to the maturity and need of each association.

An inquiry into the training schedules of three of the Council On Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) approved accrediting associations revealed that each group differed in its plan. SACS delegates the training of team members to the respective state committees. For example, a SACS trained representative in Florida indicated that in this state SACS holds an annual state conference dealing with a particular aspect of improving the accreditation process. In addition, nine other conferences are held throughout the state and an open invitation is extended to anyone who desires to serve on an accreditation team. All evaluators must be "certified" annually by attending one of the conferences before serving on a team. In Texas, a SACS representative in the state office indicated that training is recommended, but not required. The state committee leaves this up to the district chairpersons who are responsible for selecting team members. They are, however, considering hosting annual training sessions. Also under consideration is the possibility of a three-year certificate for trained evaluators.

The ACSI regional director in California, who serves as the liaison between ACSI and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in a cooperative

accreditation program between the two organizations, reported that prospective team members are "strongly urged" to attend one of the training sessions held in their area of the state. WACS publishes an annual schedule of training sessions to be held throughout the region. The schedule includes separate sessions for self-study coordinators, chairperson training, team member training, and instruction for serving on dual accreditation visits held in conjunction with other accrediting associations. By contrast, a representative from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) stated that MSA places emphasis on the training of chairpersons who, in turn, train the team members prior to the visit. ACSI has followed the MSA procedure.

When an association has a long history in the field of accreditation, the organization generally has a large body of experienced evaluators from which to draw.. Consequently, each team may have only one or two new members. In such cases, minimal training is given and the new members learn their roles by working along side the experienced team members.

Associations schedule special training sessions, primarily for chairpersons, whenever the group has made major changes in its standards, self-study materials or visitation procedures. An example of this is seen in the writing of Kells (1980a), in which he documents the efforts of WASC to train team members to understand and effectively use the newly developed WACS standards.

Arnstein (1979:359) confirms the national context of the problem by stating, "A massive problem is our inadequate knowledge of institutional and program

evaluation." Kells (1979:178) states, "What has not received systematic study is one of the potentially weakest links in the accrediting process, the people-related aspects -- the evaluation teams that visit institutions...." Kells (1980b:19) indicated that over the last ten years the "practice" in accreditation has "improved dramatically." This is a significant statement when one considers that the practice of accreditation has been around since the early 1900's. (The New England Association was founded in 1885.) "Early in the decade, pointed criticism...spurred the accreditation community to conduct self-analysis...." (Kells, 1980b:19) Some of the areas targeted for improvement were: training programs for evaluators, improving the process, clarity and usefulness of policies, improving the standards, and strengthening the expertise of staff members. He further states:

> Evaluation team activities need some improvement. The accrediting agencies must all engage in training activities to produce competent, well-prepared team members and chairpersons.... Evaluation team reports must be relevant, readable, useful, timely and objective. (Kells, 1980b:23)

The fact that the training of evaluators is a national concern can also be seen in the writing of Harcleroad (1976), in which he calls for reform in the training of evaluators. Harcleroad suggests that accreditation team members receive specific training which will lead to a national certification similar to the certificates required in the financial auditing profession. He recommends that COPA accept the responsibility for training the personnel for all of the accrediting associations which come under the council's approval, thus creating a national bank of trained and certified educational auditors. Harcleroad also advocates that the accrediting associations should have a number of certified auditors on their full-time staff and

that these staff members should serve on visiting teams in order to provide leadership and a degree of consistency in the evaluation visits. Harcleroad also calls for more specificity in the training materials and processes of the associations. Evidence of his concern can be seen in the following statement:

> The directions for each regional accrediting team should be quite explicit regarding the types of evidences which should be secured.... In this way, the institutions and the teams know exactly what is expected and the procedure that can be anticipated during the visit. (Harcleroad, 1976:24)

If large, well-established, accrediting associations are in need of improving procedures and performance, then it stands to reason that smaller and younger associations are in need of developing and maintaining strong training programs and improving performance. Telephone interviews held with the directors of several small private and religious school accrediting associations comparable to ACSI (the Southwest Association of Episcopal Schools, the Texas Association of Baptist Schools, the Texas Catholic Conference, the Lutheran School Accreditation Commission and the Texas Conference of Seventh Day Adventists) revealed that they, too, were struggling with the need to do a more effective job of training chairpersons and team members. The director of ISAS reported that the association had no specific training program. New team members gain experience by serving on teams with experienced evaluators.

Chapter Two

PROBLEM DEFINITION AND EVIDENCE

Problem Background

The ACSI accreditation program was developed by a board-appointed task force consisting of three staff persons plus teachers and administrators from member schools. The committee was influenced by the policies and procedures of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA), since the majority of the members had received their initial training and experience through MSA.

Shortly after launching the ACSI program, it became apparent that a national set of standards and procedures would be difficult to manage. The membership in the various regions of the country has been strongly influenced by the major regional accrediting associations which are operational in their regions, thus the process of achieving accreditation is viewed differently across the country. Since the "regionals" had seemingly "set the standards" it is difficult to impose a new set of standards, especially from a much younger organization. The new ACSI standards were being regarded as "east coast standards." Also, the initial chairpersons chosen to lead the ACSI visits, because of their past experience with accreditation, were more familiar with the regional practices and were somewhat hesitant or slow in adapting to the new ACSI policies and procedures.

Several attempts were made by the National Commission and the Director of Accreditation to modify the program according to regional needs while still maintaining a strong commitment to the major requirements for accreditation as established by the National Commission and approved by the Board of Directors.

In the spring of 1986, the Director of Accreditation resigned to accept another position, thus leaving the program without the one person who gave strong leadership at its inception, who worked diligently to resolve the differences between regions, and who worked full-time in further developing the program. In the absence of a full-time program director and because there was a growing desire among the ACSI regional directors for less national procedures and more flexibility within the regions, the National Commission decided to give more control over the program to the regional accreditation commissions, allowing the development of regional policies, procedures and training programs. The National Commission continues to develop broad policies and exercises supervision over the accreditation program.

Problem Background at the Regional Level

The South-Central region had a difficult start in the accreditation program due primarily to the shortage of experienced personnel to serve as consultants and chairpersons. Few member school administrators had actually led their schools through the accreditation process, especially at any level higher than state accreditation.

Initially, consultants were brought in from states outside of the region.

This, unfortunately, resulted in teams receiving a mixture of "how to" instruction gleaned from the practices of the major regional accreditation associations, namely, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA), North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), and the Western Association of Colleges and Schools (WACS). While all new programs have their share of discrepancies, ambiguities and "gaps" where needs were not anticipated, the adverse influences of four different regional programs compounded the problems for the south-central region.

Early evidences of problem discrepancies included the disparity in visiting teams' reports, the frequent need to call the regional director for clarification of standards and procedures, the acknowledged lack of clearly-written, documented practices, the telephone calls and letters received from school administrators who were somewhat disillusioned by the oral exit report or the final written report, and the apparent difficulties and possible contradictions in the team training as derived through conversations with team members.

To explore further the possibility of inadequate team training, an informal telephone survey was made. This consisted of 10 interviews with randomly selected former team members. The survey confirmed that team members felt they were inadequately prepared for their assignments. The following table depicts some areas of weakness as perceived by 10 individuals who served on accreditation teams between 1983 and 1985.

Table I

Identification of Areas of Inadequate Team Member Preparation and Skills for ACSI Accreditation Visits

Specific Preparation Areas and Skills Required	*Number of Negative Responses*	*Percent of Negative Responses*
1. Understanding of Accreditation	*6*	*60%*
2. Chairperson had the self-study sent early enough to be read prior to the visit	*2*	*20%*
3. Knew what to look for in the self-study	*8*	*80%*
4. Was prepared to write commendations and recommendations	*10*	*100%*
5. Understood the team process		
6. Knew how the team report would be generated	*10*	*100%*
7. Received instruction on writing the team report	*10*	*100%*
8. Felt the overall training was adequate	*10*	*100%*
9. The physical arrangements for the team were adequate	*3*	*30%*
10. The visit was well organized/time schedule	*2*	*20%*

Over the years, feeble attempts have been made to correct the problems. These will not be resolved, however, until the regional commission and the regional director (the practicum manager) develop a comprehensive program for training chairpersons and team members. The success of the visit is due primarily to the expertise of the chairperson who assumes the major responsibility for arranging all details pertinent to the visit, training of team members, orchestrating the on-site activities and overseeing the preparation of the final written report.

The Introductory Practicum was the first organized attempt to address the problem. It was designed to pilot the objectives of the MARP to determine

whether these strategies were realistic, appropriate and worthy of further implementation. The MARP, in turn, built upon the information derived from the pilot.

In the pilot study the initial objectives were (1) to provide better documentation of the ACSI program so that the policies, standards and procedures will be uniformly applied to all schools and all visits; (2) to provide better training for chairpersons and team members and; (3) to begin to improve the quality of communication between schools and chairpersons as reflected by the telephone inquiries received in the regional office. The major strategy to accomplish these objectives was to prepare a first-draft edition of a chairperson's manual and to pilot this manual during the seven-month practicum period. The initial draft of the manual was used for the chairperson training sessions. It should be noted that the practicum period was a short period of time in which to complete the research, prepare the manual and begin using it in the training sessions. Consequently, the manual itself was not as detailed as it now is for the MARP study. Also, the practicum pilot made the practicum manager and the accreditation commissioners more acutely aware of the need for additional materials to be placed in the manual.

In order to measure the progress, the identical questionnaire which was first used to establish the need for this study (Appendix A:179) was sent to the 57 team members who served on visitation teams during the pilot period. Forty-five completed the form giving a 78.9 percent of return.

The results of the pilot were gratifying and supported the need for this study to be continued. While the first survey revealed that only 7 out of 29 felt they had been well prepared to serve on the visits, the second survey shows that 33 out of 45 felt the training they had received was above average. Lest the practicum manager become over-confident, one must remember that a limited seven-month study cannot be considered a reliable indicator that complete and permanent changes have occurred. A question-by-question analysis and a comparison between the two surveys is presented later in this chapter (see Tables 4 and 5). The responses to the second questionnaire may be found in the appendix (Appendices D:185 and E:187). Another indicator of progress is the follow-up study on the quality of the team reports. This also is reported later in the chapter.

Since the completion of the pilot practicum the Chairperson's Manual has been significantly strengthened. Team member comments on the questionnaires and also the study of the literature revealed the need for two additional handbooks: a Team Member's Handbook and an Administrator's Handbook. The latter is given to the chief school officer at the time the school achieves candidate status. The MARP has afforded ACSI and the practicum manager the opportunity to study how this new material has helped to accomplish the objectives and the overall goal of improving the quality of the team visits through the development of a training program for chairpersons and team members.

Evidence of Problem Discrepancy

The need to improve the quality of team visits through the development of a training program for chairpersons and team members was documented during the pilot practicum by an analysis of an eight-month telephone log, the commission's findings from a study of the initial nine team reports, and a study of the results of a questionnaire completed by 29 persons who had served on South-Central teams.

A telephone log was kept by the practicum manager for the months of February through mid-September 1987. Broad, general inquiries about the accreditation program were not recorded in the log. Only specific questions from schools beginning the process, candidate schools, and from chairpersons were recorded in the log. During this period, 71 calls were received. Fifty-five were from administrators and teachers of candidate schools and 16 were from ACSI consultants/chairpersons. This averages out to 8.87 calls per month, excluding the relatively inactive months of July and August, which totaled nine calls. Most calls contained multiple questions, thus the number of inquiries about some aspect of the accreditation process totaled 153. Of this number, 28 questions were appropriately directed to the regional director. The remaining 125 questions could have, and probably should have, been directed to the consultant/chairperson. One conclusion which was drawn from the initial telephone log is that the accreditation program is too dependent upon the regional director to disseminate information and make decisions which would be more appropriately made by the

consultant/chairperson. The complete telephone log has been included in the appendix (Appendix F:188).

A second telephone log was kept during the Practicum I implementation period. For the purpose of comparison it was also kept for eight months. During this time 86 calls were received (again the general inquiries about the accreditation program were excluded from the inventory.) While the number of calls increased by 15, it did so during a period of significantly more accreditation activity. Seventy-one calls were from schools in the accreditation process and 15 were from ACSI consultant/chairpersons. The majority of the calls included multiple questions; therefore, the total inquiries were 134. Of this number, 33 questions were appropriately directed to the Regional Director and 101 calls could have, and probably should have, been directed to the respective consultants. When dealing with the total number of questions rather than the number of calls, the numbers represent a slight decrease since the piloting of the new Chairperson's Manual. The complete Practicum I telephone log is included in the appendix (Appendix G:195).

A list of the most frequently asked questions which would have been more appropriately directed to the respective consultant/chairpersons is presented in Table 2. The table also presents a comparison between the two telephone logs. One of the benefits of such an analysis is that the information has been useful in the preparation of training materials. These materials have apparently helped to reduce the number of inquiries about meeting the certification, library and Bible requirements -- items which were specifically targeted in the training materials.

Table 2

Problem Areas Evidenced by the Frequency of Inquiries

Questions Pertaining to Aspects of the the Accreditation Process	*Frequency of Each Question Phone Log #1*	*Frequency of Each Question Phone Log #2*
1. *Certification of Personnel*	22	17
2. *Library Requirements*	15	7
3. *Meeting the Bible Requirements*	14	9
4. *Inquiries about the Team Visit*	13	15
5. *Meeting the Philosophy Requirement*	9	9
6. *Personnel Issues*	8	6
7. *Questions Related to the Self-Study*	8	7
8. *School Board Issues*	7	9
9. *Budget and Financial Audit*	7	8
10. *Buildings and Grounds*	5	3

Nine accreditation visits had been completed since the inception of the accreditation program and prior to the beginning of the Introductory Practicum. The accreditation commission meets semi-annually to accept and review the written team reports. The report is one of the major factors in the accreditation process. It not only helps the commission reach a decision about accreditation, but it has immense value for the administration and faculty of the school as they continue forward in the improvement of curricula, programs, et cetera. This document should be as good or better than the self-study prepared by the school. It is the opinion of the commissioners that the value and reputation of the accreditation program is closely related to the quality of the team report.

At the June 1987 meeting of the commission and at the August 1987 meeting of the committee, the original nine team reports were evaluated with respect to consistency of format, essential elements, and overall appearance of the documents. Although the commission still had no required format, the commissioners did identify weaknesses (Table 3) which needed to be addressed and corrected in future reports. While each report did not have identical problems, the changes collectively included grammatical construction, style, format, correction of errors and/or omissions,and a general overall cosmetic improvement. The commissioners noted that some chairpersons, though good academicians, may not be good writers. Two reports had to be rewritten by the commission. The rewriting of reports causes lengthy delays in the process of notifying the school of the committee's and commission's recommendations, and action regarding accreditation. Such delays create a certain amount of ill-will.

It was noted that because the commission had failed to provide a standard or model for the team reports, the chairpersons exhibited a tendency to follow the report which had been presented to their own school when they went through the ACSI accreditation program, or from some previous experience. In most cases, it seemed to be a process of perpetuating misinformation as the "standard."

Table 3

Discrepancies in Visiting Team Reports

Essential Elements	*Followed General Format*	*Did not Follow Format*	*Percent Which Did Not Follow Format*
Title Page	*8*	*1*	*11.11%*
Table of Contents/Pagination	*3*	*6*	*66.66%*
Identification of Team Members	*8*	*1*	*11.11%*
Introductory Statement[1]	*6*	*3*	*33.33%*
Major Commendations/Recommendations with references	*6*	*3*	*33.33%*
Section Reports	*8*	*1*	*11.11%*
Instructional Section	*8*	*1*	*11.11%*
Closing Summary	*2*	*7*	*77.77%*
Statement of Appreciation	*4*	*5*	*55.55%*

[1] *The Introductory Statement ranged from less than one page to four pages. In some cases, it was a letter from the chairperson. Most statements included a brief history of the school. One commented on the quality of the self-study; another presented the philosophy of the school. Some included an overview of the school program; others described the school setting or campus. Several complimented the board, administration, and staff for seeking accreditation or for the quality of the school program.*

In preparation for the practicum intervention the commission identified 21 essential elements for the team report. During the Practicum I period an additional nine accreditation visits were completed and reports were written. These nine team reports were also evaluated by the commission. Excellent progress has been made and all reports but one included the required essential elements (Appendix H:201). It was also determined that a complete sample of a team report should be added to the Chairperson's Manual and selected pages from a report should be placed in the Team Member's Handbook.

Further evidence of the problem is seen in the pre-practicum survey which was made of the 40 teachers and administrators who had served on ACSI accreditation teams. To develop a questionnaire, the practicum manager queried by telephone all members of the National Accreditation Commission, each Regional Director, and every chairperson of the ACSI regional accreditation commissions. These represented the "body of experts" who knew the ACSI accreditation program and who had the most experience working with the program.

Each representative was asked to identify the ten most important skills or areas of information needed to serve effectively on an ACSI accreditation team. This resulted in 40 recommendations. The 40 items were then placed on a questionnaire (Appendix I:202) and sent to all 19 persons represented in the three groups mentioned above. Once again everyone was asked to identify, from the 40 possibilities, the ten most important areas for training. A 100 percent response was received, and the 40 items were reduced to ten. It is important to note that the top ten were a clear choice. There was a marked decline in the rating for the remaining items (Appendix I:202).

Having arrived at a clear consensus for the ten most important ingredients for team training, a questionnaire was designed to survey all of the teachers and administrators who have served on ACSI teams (Appendix A:179). The objective was to determine if training had been provided and the degree of success obtained. The questionnaire was first piloted with ten randomly selected team members to determine the validity and clarity of each question. Respondents

were asked to evaluate the clarity of the question and then respond by answering each question with a rating of "one" (poor) to "five" (superior).

The following changes were made in the questionnaire before being mailed to the larger group. Questions one and two needed to be rephrased to make it clear that the intent was to measure the training presented by the chairperson and not a question dealing with the individual's ability to perform due to background, prior knowledge or prior experience. Also in question two, the phrase "after the visit" was eliminated since it did not seem to be critical to the visit or have any effect on the visit if a team member did not know what would happen after the team filed its report. It was determined that question eight had two parts and needed to be separated into parts (a) and (b). Discussion also ensued about use of the word "evaluate" in question six since the process includes both evaluation and validation. It was determined that the examples given helped to clarify the question and that it would be helpful to know if the chairperson is addressing both aspects of the process. Minor changes were recommended to eliminate possible redundancy in the subquestions/statements which were used to help the respondent comprehend the breadth of the questions. The revised questionnaire was subsequently sent to 30 additional former team members. Out of a total of 40 questionnaires, 29 were completed giving a 72.5 percent of return. The completed survey revealed strengths and weaknesses in the program which existed prior to the Introductory Practicum.

The results can be analyzed from several perspectives. The practicum manager studied the total responses to see what each team member thought

about the training program as a whole (Appendix B:183). If one considers the middle score (3) as being average, and if an average rating is not good enough, then 21 felt that the training program needed to be improved, and eight were basically satisfied with the present program. If an average rating represents acceptable performance, the numbers are just the opposite: only 10 were dissatisfied and 19 reported the training to be average or above.

When looking at the collective responses to each question, it is clear that the association was doing a poor job. Again, if average is considered to be mediocre or not good enough, then by grouping the below-average and average scores together (Table 4), the association was doing poorly in 9 out of 11 areas. If average is acceptable and grouped with the above-average scores, then the results change considerably -- four areas were weak, and seven were satisfactory (Table 5). The item analysis profile may be found in the appendix (Appendix C:184).

Table 4

A Comparison of the Responses From Two Team Member Surveys: Average Scores Grouped With Below Average Scores

Questions[1]	Pre-Intervention		Practicum I Intervention	
	Average & Below	Above Average	Average & Below	Above Average
1. Knowledge of Standards	23	6	14	31
2. Knowledge of Process (sequence)	17	15	16	29
3. Evaluation of Self-Study	24	5	22	23
4. Role as a Team Member	19	10	9	26
5. Organization of Time	11	18	14	31
6. How to Evaluate	14	15	6	39
7. How to Interview	25	4	31	14
8a. How to Write	19	10	13	32
8b. Samples of Reports	19	10	8	37
9. Evaluating Philosophy & Purpose	18	11	19	26
10. Evidence of Biblical Distinctives	17	12	20	25

[1]The complete questions may be found in Appendix A:179

Table 5

A Comparison of the Responses From Two Team Member Surveys: Average Scores Grouped With Above Average Scores

Questions[1]	Pre-Intervention		Practicum I Intervention	
	Below Average	Average & Above	Below Average	Average & Above
1. Knowledge of Standards	14	15	5	40
2. Knowledge of Process (Sequence)	11	18	7	38
3. Evaluation of Self-Study	16	13	11	34
4. Role as a Team Member	9	20	2	43
5. Organization of Time	6	23	3	42
6. How to Evaluate	5	24	2	43
7. How to Interview	22	7	16	29
8a. How to Write	15	14	6	39
8b. Samples of Reports	18	11	4	41
9. Evaluating Philosophy & Purpose	8	21	2	43
10. Evidence of Biblical Distinctives	10	19	9	36

[1]The complete questions may be found in Appendix A:179

In either case, the association was doing poorly in preparing team members to (1) evaluate the self-study prior to and in preparation for the visit (question 3), (2) interview or elicit information and listen with neutrality without responding (question 7), and (3) write a team report, since team members were not given sufficient samples of written materials or a completed report to provide a "model" of what is desired (question 8). It is surprising that the responses for item 8b were as high as they were, since the association had not adopted a model or made samples of writing styles available. One can only assume that chairpersons who were from accredited schools brought samples of their own school's report or samples from previous visits. In such cases, team members may have assumed they were looking at a "model" or ACSI approved standard when, in truth, it may have been less than desirable.

Regardless of the grouping in Tables 4 and 5, the Association apparently is doing a satisfactory job in helping team members to organize and make the best use of their time (question 5), in understanding the school evaluation process (question 6), that is, understanding the process of validating the strengths and weaknesses identified by the school staff in their self-study, and knowing how to observe, but not compare, and identifying problem areas without getting into causes or solutions. Several comments were made by the respondents. The more applicable ones can be found in the appendix (Appendix J:207). The members of the accreditation commission were unanimous in deciding that the average scores were not acceptable and these should be grouped with the below average, thus the weaknesses as shown in Table 4 were the areas targeted for

improvement.

As previously indicated, the second questionnaire was sent to the 57 team members who served on accreditation teams during the Practicum I intervention period. Forty-five people (78.9%) completed the form and returned it. The numbers have changed significantly. When combining the average and below average scores together, only 12 team members (26.7%) were dissatisfied with the training and 33 (73.3%) rated the training above average. When placing the average scores along with the above average scores, 43 out of 45 team members (95.6%) felt they had been adequately prepared for the visit (Appendix D:185). An item analysis profile may be found in the appendix (Appendix E:187).

Tables 4 and 5 present the responses to each question and compare the Practicum I post-intervention responses with those given earlier before the practicum was initiated. Since Table 4 reflects the preferred position of the regional commissioners and the practicum manager, it is important to note that since the Practicum I intervention the association appears to have made improvements in nine out of the 11 skill areas. Interviewing continues to be the weakest area. Progress has been made in evaluating the school's self-study instrument, but this area still needs more attention. Since 45 participated in the second survey and only 29 in the first, it might be better to focus only on the scores in the average and below column. As previously stated, "average" is not good enough; therefore the scores in this column are of particular importance. It is now clear that more emphasis must be placed on the skill areas represented by questions 2, 3, 5, 7, 8a, 9 and 10, while at the same time maintaining the strong gains achieved in the remaining three skills.

Justification of Problem Situation as Problematic

Several factors justify the use of time and energy to resolve the discrepancies. Although accreditation is completely voluntary, it is one of the major "tools" in education to bring about change and school improvement. It is also a benchmark in society which assures parents and students that courses taken at the school will be transferable to other schools. Upon graduation, the student is assured that all credits will be accepted by the university. Parents who choose to send their children to a private Christian school desire these same assurances. Christian schools need to be accredited, thus ACSI is working to offer its member schools an accreditation program which will be recognized nationally and internationally. Such recognition is not easy to obtain. The major regional accrediting associations see little need for additional accrediting agencies and COPA takes a strong position against the proliferation of accrediting agencies.

It is problematic, because if the South-Central regional accreditation program is to obtain and enjoy such recognition, it must be known for its quality. The discrepancies confirmed by the surveys must be resolved if the South-Central region is to be successful in arranging for joint visits with other nationally recognized programs such as NCA and SACS. ACSI must be able to demonstrate and substantiate that the visiting team members are competent, well-trained, and have the expertise to evaluate a school and prepare a well-written team report. All of this must be at least comparable with what is being done by the nationally recognized (regional) accrediting associations.

Resolution of the problems in the ACSI program is justifiable and worthy of the time, energy, and resources because of the association's philosophical presupposition that Christian schools should seek to be accredited by an organization which comprehends the mission and objective of the religious school and which is recognized for its leadership in the field of Christian education. Religious schools have a distinctive purpose, philosophy and program; thus the evaluation and ensuing recommendations are more appropriate and meaningful when they come from colleagues and peers who have been an integral part of this specialized system of education.

Religious schools must not become just like other private schools nor model their programs after the public schools. Secular accrediting agencies, being more accustomed to evaluating public and non-religious private schools, generally do not have the expertise to evaluate and make recommendations about the Biblical and spiritual dimensions which are the "heart" of the Christian school program. Secular teams tend to make recommendations which alter rather than preserve the Biblical distinctives of the school. The ACSI program is specifically designed to evaluate both the spiritual and the academic programs in light of the specific purpose or mission of the school.

Another reason for correcting and strengthening the team training program is that the region is on the verge of tripling the number of schools seeking to be accredited. Twenty-five schools have recently been admitted into candidacy. Still others have applied but are waiting for their pre-candidacy visit. Eleven schools were scheduled to have visiting teams on campus during the 1987-88

school year which included the time frame for the Introductory Practicum. Nine schools were actually visited, and two schools postponed the visit for at least a year. Another twelve schools were scheduled to be evaluated by June 1989. Ten schools were actually visited before the conclusion of this study. This recent increase in activity is due primarily to the program receiving full recognition in the state of Texas. The Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC) granted this approval in January 1987. Nineteen of the candidate schools are in Texas. This represents an urgent need for the continued development of training materials since there have been, and will continue to be, a significant number of new people serving on these teams. It has also been necessary to assign as consultant/chairperson individuals who have served only on two previous teams since it is difficult to ask anyone to chair more than one visit each school year.

Prior to the Practicum I intervention the association had only a limited number of policies and procedures in writing. This has been greatly strengthened during the practicum process. The policy section has been brought up-to-date and the procedures have been documented. This information is now in the new Chairperson's Manual and was implemented during the MARP. The standardization of forms and materials brings order, continuity, and uniformity to the training sessions, the school visits, and the team reports. This should give some assurance that all school visits will be conducted according to a planned format and that all schools will receive the same thorough review.

Little has been done to develop training programs for the smaller private and religious accrediting associations. Because of this apparent lack of religiously

oriented team training material, most groups are relying on what they believe to be the practice of the major regional associations or the state accreditation programs. It is significant to note that the training filmstrip still being used by SACS was produced in 1979, by the National Study for School Evaluation group located in Arlington, Virginia. This filmstrip gives only a very broad outline of team responsibilities.

Preparation for the Practicum I phase consisted primarily of pulling together from several sources, and documenting, the ACSI policies, materials and procedures since it was necessary first to know what the association had originally intended, and then to see if the organization and clarification (identifying and addressing all ambiguities) of the materials would effect change and improve the program. This phase also included frequent contacts with the other ACSI regional directors to determine their understanding and interpretations of the materials. In addition, throughout the Practicum I phase, the practicum manager spent considerable time researching the literature, contacting other accrediting associations in search of new material to be included in the new manual, and in the training sessions. Throughout the entire study additional materials were continually added to the Chairperson's Manual and, as previously noted, two additional handbooks were prepared. These materials were fully implemented in the MARP study to determine their effect in training personnel and consequently in improving the quality of the accreditation visits.

Finally, a well-developed training program can be used by the other seven regional commissions within the ACSI organization, and may be useful to the

several other religious organizations which have recently developed their own accreditation programs to meet the new private school accreditation standards in Texas. Each of the ACSI regional directors has requested and has been sent copies of the MARP edition of the Chairperson's Manual. Four TEPSAC recognized accrediting agencies have requested the same. Although the study is intended to improve the accreditation program in the ACSI South-Central region, it is good to know that others are benefiting from this study.

Probable Cause

The age of the accreditation program in the South-Central Region has to be one of the major causes of the discrepancies. Two of the large regional associations have been at the task for one hundred years, while the ACSI program has been operational for a mere six years. Prior to the practicum intervention, the regional office had not taken the time nor did it have sufficient expertise to resolve the problems.

Using the Middle States model was undoubtedly a mistake. The national commission underestimated or was unaware of the degree of regional differences and the confusion that this would bring to a fledgling program. Also, it was expected that the national commission would continue to give strong leadership to this program by developing the policy manuals, training programs, and the forms and materials to be used by the visiting teams. To change direction suddenly and give this responsibility to the regional commission was a sharp departure from the preceding pattern and caught the regional commission and the regional director unprepared to take over this responsibility. Accreditation is one

of twenty-plus services provided by the regional office. Insufficient time and resources had been given to this program; consequently, progress in developing training materials was quite slow.

Since the questionnaire which was sent to individuals who had previously served on teams revealed that, in the majority of cases, the chairpersons did a less than adequate job of preparing the team for the visit, one would conclude from this that the association, in turn, has done a poor job of preparing chairpersons. The questionnaires returned from team members during the Practicum I phase show that some improvement has been made. The above stated probable causes are based upon the practicum manager's personal experiences, observations, interviews, and research of the literature.

The Practicum I phase of the intervention attempted to deal with the probable causes in several ways. The age of the association's accreditation program and, therefore, the experience levels of the people involved could not be changed. However, gains are being made in knowledge about accreditation and accreditation practices. Since little had been done about the problems prior to this study, every effort was made to learn from the knowledgeable experts -- those who have had extensive experience, or at least more experience than the regional director and the commission members; this was reasonably successful during the short pilot phase but has become more successful as the practicum manager and ACSI staff prepared diligently throughout the MARP intervention. The Practicum I phase provided the impetus for gathering information and adapting and piloting forms and materials as they were found through the research and

interviewing processes.

The MARP phase was characterized by having assembled in sequential order and placed in a chairpersons manual all of the materials to be used by chairpersons in the training program and in directing the team visits. An outgrowth of the Practicum I intervention was the need to prepare two additional handbooks, for team members and for school administrators. These were used for the first time during the MARP study.

The scope of this study was increased by the chairpersons using the new training materials and the team members using the new team handbook during the 10 accreditation visits completed during the MARP intervention period. In addition, the consultants are using, and will continue to use, the materials in the manual when consulting with the 19 schools in candidacy. Also, the administrators of these schools are now using the new manual prepared specifically for them.

Chapter Three

PROBLEM SITUATION AND CONTEXT

Written Policies and Procedure Statements

Items of Potential Impact on the Problem Solving Process. Prior to this study the National Accreditation Commission had developed two brief manuals which have had a limited impact on solving the problem areas. In 1983, an initial national policy manual was produced. The intent was to place in writing procedural policies which would guide the regions in launching the accreditation program. Since then, additional policies have been approved. However, with the departure of the director of accreditation, some things have been allowed to slip, resulting in confusion about the accuracy of some policies. A comparison of the policy manual in the South-Central regional office with the official National Board Policy Manual maintained by the secretary of the board, revealed that the policy manuals at the regional level were not kept up-to-date, resulting in omissions and contradictions. An illustration of this is the statement which reads, "a school shall be accredited for a period of seven years," while in another place it reads, "...for a period of three to seven years." This material was carefully researched and documented in the Introductory Practicum stage through a study of the national commission minutes and the national board minutes to determine the accuracy of specific policies and the completeness of the policy manual.

The regional commission has made a number of policy-type decisions over the past six years. These have been extracted from the minutes, re-evaluated, and specific regional policies were added to the policy manual and clearly

identified as regional policies. Care has been taken to be sure that policies developed by the regional commission are not in conflict or do not in any way negate the national policies.

A complete and accurate policy manual had been prepared prior to implementation of the practicum and it was incorporated into the Chairperson's Manual. This was a valuable base upon which to build in preparing the new training materials for the south-central region and for the MARP study.

In 1983, the national commission also prepared a brief manual which outlined some of the duties and responsibilities of the team chairperson. This information was broad-based since it was written from a national, rather than a regional, perspective. While this initial manual provided a starting point, it was necessary to re-write much of the material to regionalize it.

Over the first five years of the ACSI accreditation program a few forms had been developed to help the chairperson prepare for and lead a visit. In preparation for this study additional forms were collected from the other ACSI regional offices. These materials were evaluated and selectively adapted to meet the needs of the South-Central region and were included in the first draft of the new Chairperson's Manual.

While the first draft of the manual was being piloted during the Practicum I period, the practicum manager continued to acquire additional materials through the search of the literature and through the interviewing process. In preparation for the MARP study the Chairperson's Manual was significantly expanded to include materials collected from a variety of sources.

In addition to the above collection of materials, the study which was made of the initial nine team reports was helpful in determining the kind of assistance and training that was needed. Also, following each accreditation visit, the schools and the teams were encouraged to complete "Section 18" of the self-study manual. This section is entitled, "Recommendations for Improving the Accreditation Program." These reports give valuable insights as to how school personnel and team members feel about the procedures and the visits. Only a few had completed this section prior to the initiation of this study. A greater effort was made to receive this document from all schools and teams during the practicum period. This information also guided the practicum manager and the commission in developing the new material to be included in the manual and to be used in team training. The MARP has provided the opportunity to evaluate the effect this new material has had on the training process and the team visits.

Norms of Behavior, Values, Traditions

Being a relatively young organization with the administrative structure for problem resolution limited to an executive director who offices in California, a regional director in Dallas, a national commission which meets semi-annually and a regional commission which meets on the average of three times a year, there is not a meaningful amount of norms, values, or traditions, especially when compared with a larger and older educational system or accrediting agency.

Presently, the success of the accreditation program rests heavily upon the ability of the regional director (practicum manager) to answer all questions about policy or procedures and to give direction to the program. This has been

documented by the telephone logs which are discussed in chapter two and which appear in the appendix (Appendices F:188 and G:195). After five years this may be a difficult pattern to change, but it must be done. The regional director, though a standing member of the regional accreditation commission, is a staff member who has no actual authority when it comes to making decisions about the accreditation process. The director merely helps to communicate and explain policy and makes certain that policy is implemented and followed.

An analysis of the telephone logs indicated that it would be better if the majority of the questions were directed to the consultant and team chairperson. One of the goals is to redirect most of the communication from the school to the consultant/chairperson, thus eliminating the third party. School personnel must concern themselves with doing things the way the consultant wants it done in preparation for the team visit. The opinion of the regional director is inconsequential. The consultant or chairperson, in turn, may wish to seek the advice and counsel of the chairman of the accreditation commission or the regional director, in that order. A comparison of the two telephone logs indicates that some progress was achieved in the Practicum I period, but there is a need for more improvement.

The ACSI program may be unique in that once the school achieves candidate status, a consultant is appointed to guide the school through the self-study process. The consultant later becomes the chairperson of the visiting team. This consultant/chairperson role is explicitly tied to the association's philosophy of servanthood and of being a service organization. One of the important values

of the association is that of serving the membership and helping member schools improve and achieve excellence. Having completed the task of assisting and guiding the school through the self-study, the consultant then becomes the chairperson who guides the team in the process of validation and evaluation. Since the team does not decide whether the school will be accredited (this determination is made only by the accreditation commission), the chairperson is not in a position to effect or prejudice the outcome.

One of the normal working patterns in the accreditation process is to rely heavily on the ability of the chairperson to conduct a successful visit. Successful visits must not be equated with achieving accreditation, but with the ability of the teams to perform the task to the satisfaction of all parties. It is assumed that the chairperson, being a seasoned educator, having demonstrated leadership ability, and having had prior experience of serving on several accreditation visits, possesses the necessary skills and knowledge to direct a team visit. This tradition and practice is evidenced by the majority of accrediting associations. While this pattern may work for the large and very experienced accrediting associations, it has not been completely successful for ACSI as evidenced by the responses to the initial survey (Appendix B:183). The second survey, completed by the team members during the Practicum I study reveals that good progress has been made in the ability of the chairpersons to train team members and lead the visits (Appendix D:185). It is anticipated that this progress will increase during the MARP as the chairpersons use the additional training materials contained in the manual.

Another practice has been to offer a one-hour seminar for prospective team members at the annual teachers' conventions and then an additional two hours of training was provided immediately prior to the visit. Again, the first survey indicated that this procedure has been less than successful. The second survey shows that some improvement has been made but since the length of training had not been increased, the gain must be largely due to the additional training materials provided during the practicum pilot phase. In preparation for the MARP study the convention training was increased to two hours and separate sessions were held for team members and for consultant/chairpersons. In addition, the chairpersons were directed to give more attention to the training sessions conducted on-site just prior to the visit and when possible increase this time to four to six hours. The survey of the MARP team members should indicate the effectiveness of this training.

Formal and Informal Influences of Individuals and Groups

Helpful Influences. The practicum manager serves as a member of the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC). This presents an avenue for contact with the accreditation directors of nine other private and religious accrediting associations which are active in Texas and in the south-central states. The commission holds a minimum of two meetings each year but special meetings were scheduled resulting in a number of additional meetings during the pre-practicum and early months of the Practicum I study. These meetings have acquainted the practicum manager with the goals, structure, plans and frustrations of other accrediting associations, especially those of similar size

or age of ACSI. Through TEPSAC the manager has served as a consultant to two associations seeking to be approved by TEPSAC and has made field-based observations and evaluations of their on-site accreditation visits. The TEPSAC affiliation has also afforded numerous opportunities to discuss and compare accreditation procedures with the respective commissioners on a less formal basis.

Another helpful influence, and one of a more general nature, has been the members of the ACSI Regional Council. This council is comprised of eight elected representatives from the respective states within the region. It meets semi-annually and represents a "grass roots" input into the plans, activities and future direction of the region. The district representatives are a good "sounding board" for what is happening or for what can be anticipated in each state. Their thoughts and perceptions of the accreditation program are valuable to this study.

All members of the regional accreditation commission are solidly committed to the development of a quality training program. Assurances of cooperation have also been given by the national commission members, the Executive Director, the Consultant for Academic Affairs, and the newly appointed Chairperson of the board-level Academic and Spiritual Life Commission.

The experienced consultant/chairpersons in the South-Central region were another group of individuals involved in problem resolution. The majority of the chairpersons wanted changes to be made in the procedures and welcomed the opportunity to pilot new training materials.

Hindering Influences. One former member of the regional accreditation commission, who is presently both an active and the most experienced

chairperson, will be the most resistant to change. Having had prior experience with North Central accreditation and having served on an ad hoc committee during the development of the original ACSI accreditation materials, this individual will be inclined to continue past practices.

An additional and unanticipated hinderance surfaced during the pilot study. Two differing opinions existed among the commission members and consultant/chairpersons relative to the consultant's role in assisting the school through the self-study process and in getting the school ready for the campus visit. Some consultants felt that their role was to "be available" or to be "on call" but not to exert pressure or influence on the school which they viewed as pushing the school through the process. Others, including the practicum manager, felt that school administrators, like most leaders, labor under the "tyrany of the urgent" and thus respond to deadlines or to doing whatever is the most important at that time. Consequently, the consultant, in concert with the school administrator, should set specific deadlines for completing the steps in the self-study process and expect each deadline to be met. After frequent and thorough discussions on this point it was determined that the real issue is effective and continuous communication between the consultant and the school administrator. The consultant is now encouraged to keep a monthly log of the communiques and to document the school's progress.

External Circumstances

Helpful Influences. Recent changes in the accreditation of private schools in Texas has been a positive influence on the practicum and the MARP. Private

schools no longer qualify for state accreditation, and all private schools presently accredited by the Texas Education Association will lose their accreditation by July 1989. The climate is right to demonstrate that private school accreditation programs can be as effective as both the state accreditation program and the SACS program which has for many years been recognized in the state. Private and religious school personnel are eager to work together in the development of strong accreditation materials and programs. The practicum manager received helpful suggestions from the directors of TEPSAC approved accreditation programs (see Chapter four, "Data Gathering Through Consulting With Others").

Hindering Influences. The restraint of budget, time and personnel will undoubtedly have an effect on the extent to which resolution can be managed. The South-Central region has been adversely affected by the depressed economy, especially in the oil states of Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. This may limit the number of schools seeking accreditation over the next two or three years because of their own budget limitations. Schools presently in candidacy may find it necessary to delay the process due to a reduction in personnel and the expense of bringing an accreditation team to campus. Since the beginning of the practicum, three schools have had to put the accreditation process on hold due to finances. Since ACSI cannot waive the fees or finance the cost of the visit, there is little that can be done for these particular schools.

The problems of time and sufficient personnel are typical problems of all non-profit organizations. ACSI, being a religious ministry as well as an educational service organization, operates on a restricted budget. Sources of revenue are

limited to membership fees and convention income. The forming of ad hoc committees and the number of times the regional accreditation commission can be assembled depends upon budget conditions. Distance and rising travel costs have also affected the number of training sessions which could be held during the Practicum I period. This financial restraint continued during the MARP study. The regional director has endeavored to keep the costs at a minimum by holding commission meetings and training sessions in conjunction with other activities. Appropriate personnel have been asked to come a day early or stay an extra day after another meeting in order to work on the preparation of training materials to be included in the new manual and handbooks. This approach has been quite succesful and has not seriously impeded the progress of the Practicum I or MARP studies.

Chapter Four

PROBLEM CONCEPTUALIZATION, PRACTICUM OUTCOMES AND THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Bibliographic Research and Review of the Literature

In preparation for this study, a review of the literature was undertaken for the following reasons: (1) to determine whether there is historical credence to the problem area; (2) to ascertain contemporary concerns of educators who have been in the forefront of developing and improving the accreditation process, and in particular the task of training chairpersons and team members; (3) to study the publications and training materials of the regional accrediting associations who have wrestled with similar problems for fifty years and more; (4) to study the publications and training materials of smaller and younger accrediting agencies and to discover whether these organizations have struggled with comparable problems; and (5) to find plausible solutions and strategies to ameliorate the problem areas and improve the ACSI training program for chairpersons and team members.

It is significant to note an important observation made by H.R. Kells:

> It is therefore surprising to find that the subject of evaluation team selection, training and performance has received relatively little studied attention from accrediting agencies and is almost unaddressed in the published or in the less formal literature. This is not to imply that accrediting agencies do not compose evaluation teams carefully or that they do not conduct some training activities. However, there is little evidence that they have seriously studied the performance of their teams -- as functioning teams and as evaluators. (Kells, 1980a:2)

The Educational Record (Spring 1972) published an article entitled, "Basic Policies for Accreditation" (author unknown), which confirms that from its inception accreditation has been subject to conflicting opinions in regard to its value as well as its practices. While accrediting associations have been recognized and praised for their role in serving as catalyists for improvement and raising the standards of institutions, the associations' practices and policies have been frequently criticized. In an attempt to address the current criticisms, the Commission for the Study of Accreditation of Selected Health Educational Programs, adopted a statement of basic principles of accreditation. This study was co-sponsored by the National Commission on Accrediting and the principles are applicable to all accrediting agencies. Specific principles suggest historical credence to the Introductory Practicum and the Major Applied Research Project (MARP).

> Accreditation should be designed and conducted in such manner that it serves as a guiding influence in the development, improvement, and operation of institutions and their program of study. (Educational Record, 1972:151)

In extrapolating upon this principle the author warns that accrediting policies should not be prescriptive, i.e. formulating lists of "thou shalts" and "thou shalt nots," but at the same time should not allow for such freedom that almost anything is acceptable. This is important to keep in mind as the policies of ACSI are reviewed, documented and placed in the Chairperson's Manual. It is also an important aspect of training since the accreditation teams are comprised of knowledgeable and experienced educators who may have tendencies to be too flexible or inflexible in the application of standards.

The following two principles are equally applicable to the policy sections of this study and to the task of clarification of standards and the refining of visiting team practices and procedures.

> Policies, procedures, and standards of accreditation should be established and applied on a national and uniform basis.
>
> The policies, procedures, and techniques of all accrediting agencies and organizations should be adopted only after thorough analysis and validation, and should be subjected to continual analysis and review to ensure that they are appropriate, consistent, and sound for the purposes for which they are employed. (Educational Record, 1972:151)

As stated in chapter two, "Problem Definition and Evidence," it is important to nationalize the policies and to strive for consistent application within each of the regions. This study appropriately forces the practicum manager and the Accreditation Commission to "analyze and validate" all policies, procedures and techniques to be sure they are appropriate, consistent, and accomplish their intended purposes.

Two other principles contained in this report are of special import to this study. "All accreditation should be conducted in an equitable and fair manner, and consistent with the right of appeal and due process." Also, "Accreditation should be conducted with a minimum of effort, time, and financial cost, consistent with attainment of the purposes that accreditation is intended to serve." (Educational Record, 1972:152) The concept of appeal and due process had been, at best, implied in the ACSI program, but there were no clear statements of policy and procedure prior to the implementation of the pilot practicum. Also, the importance of the emphasis on responsible use of time, effort and costs must not be overlooked. While this article does not specifically

focus on the training of visiting teams, these principles dealing with policy, standards, procedures consistency, appropriateness, inequality and fairness reinforce the goals and strategies of the MARP study.

Harcleroad (1976) called for changes in the way evaluators are trained. He recommends a "national bank" of evaluators all trained by COPA. This seems somewhat contradictory or radical since so many other writers stress the need for more flexibility and regionalization, with emphasis on acknowledging differences rather than promoting a national standard. Here again one sees the conflicting viewpoints which have historically plagued the accreditation programs. Furthermore, Harcleroad advocates the employment of full-time evaluators to serve on the paid staff of the respective accrediting agencies. Neither of the above recommendations would be embraced by ACSI. A major ingredient of the association's evaluation is biblically based -- that is, the need to evaluate whether the school programs eminate from its spiritual mission and whether the programs reinforce or detract from the spiritual purpose. Presumably COPA trained evaluators would not be available to ACSI, but if they were, the evaluators would need to be supportive of Christian education and specifically trained in a Christian philisophy of education and the evaluating procedures pertaining thereto. Also, the association started with a national program and quickly discovered that in order to be effective there would have to be significant regional input or distinctives. Adding full-time staff evaluators is cost-prohibitive at the present time.

Harcleroad does identify the need for more specificity in regional materials and processes.

> The directions for each regional accrediting team should be quite explicit regarding the types of evidences which should be secured . . . In this way, the institutions and the teams know exactly what is expected and the procedure that can be anticipated during the visit. (Harcleroad, 1976:24)

This reinforces the presupposition of the practicum manager and strengthens the goal of providing better training and training materials; and the need to document all procedures and expectations for the benefit of the team members and for the benefit of the schools being visited.

The fact that change comes very slowly in the field of accreditation has been cited by Stephen Romine. Romine is a past president of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, otherwise known as the North Central Association (NCA). NCA entered the accrediting arena in 1895. In his article, "Accreditation and Educational Reforms" he states,

> There exists in regional accreditation a fundamental approach that has inspired improvement and served secondary schools well, although imperfectly, for almost a century. During this period it has responded slowly to the needs of change, doubtless registering too much stability, but never being stampeded. (Romine, 1972:377)

It is one thing to be comfortable with the way things have been done in the past, but one must recognize that "the way" is not always the right or only way. This is the very reason that ACSI, while still in its infancy in accreditation, desires to glean the best from each association without necessarily buying into the whole system and accepting the good with the bad. There are things which newer and younger organizations can change because it is not steeped in tradition and does not have a large bureaucratic system with which to contend.

As Romine stated so well,

> As the new and promising are incorporated into the educational endeavor, it is important also to retain the best of the past and present which is still useful and to eliminate that which no longer serves. (Romine, 1972:376)

Kells (1979) gives evidence that at least ten years ago one of the weakest links in the accrediting process was the training of personnel to serve on the visiting teams. He substantiates the vital role of the team chairperson and the importance of proper training for this person.

> The team chairperson is probably the most important single factor in determining the effectiveness of the evaluation team. It is this individual's job to orient the team members and manage the team experience, including a primary role in preparing the team report.
> (Kells, 1979:190)

In the same article, Kells deals with another important issue, the makeup or balance of the visiting teams. Addressing the purported dominance of administrators, and specifically, institutional CEO's on the visiting teams, Kells' research negates this charge by reporting that of the Middle States teams studied only 10-12 percent were heads of institutions. New and young accrediting agencies will find it reassuring to note that it is not uncommon to have 30 percent inexperienced members and as high as 67 percent of the team members who have served on three visits or less. While stating that there is a need to include new members on the teams, he also presents a word of caution:

> One could argue that any further increase in the proportion of first-time evaluators on accreditation teams could lead to problems of lack of continuity in the process, difficulties with team orientation and management, a decrease in comparability of reactions to similar situations, and a lack of understanding of the improvement orientation . . . . (Kells 1979:187)

The importance of this information to problem resolution is that, while the

ACSI teams will undoubtedly continue for some time to have a significant number of team members who have served on three teams or less, the teams should not have a disproportionate number of new, inexperienced team members. Also, a balanced team should include chief administrators, middle management personnel (principals, vice-principals and department heads), teachers and support staff (counsellors and business administrators). In cases where it is necessary to have a number of lesser experienced team members, greater emphasis must be placed on the pre-visit training sessions.

Kells (1980b) in writing about proliferation and agency effectiveness calls for more emphasis on training evaluators, improving the process, clarifying policies, and strengthening the expertise of agency staff members. Unfortunately he does not tell how these can be accomplished. Regarding agency effectiveness he states:

> All accrediting agencies must provide effective on-campus staff assistance and consultation. The need to explain standards, to assist in self-study design, to speak to the professional staff, and to otherwise translate the cold, written descriptions and standards of accrediting agencies into usable, relevant processes at the institution requires competent staff contact.
>
> Evaluation team activities need some improvement. The accrediting agencies must all engage in training activities to produce competent, well prepared team members and chairpersons. The team members must be carefully selected in light of institutional characteristics and needs, and they must be unbiased (therefore not from local and/or competing institutions).
>
> Evaluation team reports must be relevant, readable, useful, timely, and objective. An oral report should be made before the team leaves concerning every major aspect to be put into the written report.
>
> Accrediting agencies must provide the rights to appear and to appeal. (Kells, 1980b:23)

Kells' exhortation is significant in that it identifies needs which parallel the needs of ACSI, and this confirms some of the major ingredients for a strong and successful accreditation program. The recommendations are in line with the MARP strategies of strengthening the consultant services, documenting the procedures and materials, and providing effective training for chairpersons and team members.

In an article entitled, "An Effort To Improve The Performance of Regional Accreditation Evaluation Teams," Kells (1980a) reports on the efforts of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges to train team members to use effectively their newly adopted standards. He begins with the following statement which capsulizes the role of the team:

> The performance of the evaluation team in the regional accreditation process is of critical importance as one of the three major steps in the process -- the self-study, the team visit and report, and the action by the accrediting commission. The evaluation team effort is a difficult one to perform well. The team comes at a time of considerable anxiety on most campuses (1), and it attempts to perform what some feel are two contradictory functions. First, the attempt is made to evaluate the institution using the report produced as a result of the self-study process. . . . They also attempt a second major thrust -- at least in most regions. They seek to assist the institution by sharing expertise. Making all of this happen demands, on the part of the visitors, subject matter expertise, sensitivity, teamwork, and skills as a group, all marshalled by a chairperson of maturity and experience and with skills as a group leader. (Kells, 1980a:1)

In reporting on a survey he conducted on the subject of team training, he states:

> The evaluation team training function is manifest in some, usually one-day, training sessions which most but not all evaluators or chairpersons attend. Recent inquiries by the writer indicate that the primary modes of instruction in these sessions are lecture, or panel presentations, the answering of questions, and discussion groups. Some agencies use a work group activity or two, and some use sample materials for critique.

> Rarely are simulation, role-playing, or "hands-on," learn-by-doing techniques employed. Most agencies have a written manual of some kind for evaluators and chairpersons to read. . . .
>
> There have been a few efforts to study some aspects of the evaluation team activity in accreditation. Other than Harcleroad's essay calling for a highly trained cadre of educational auditors to replace volunteer evaluation teams (2), there have not been thorough studies or proposals made. . . . Baysore, in 1970, studied the extent to which a sample of 10 specialized and one regional accrediting agency seemed to prepare well their evaluators for the task (8). Baysore's study was the only one known to this writer which directly addressed the training or preparation dimension. He found that only four of the seven agencies had formal training programs, the thrust of which seemed to be the improvement of the capacity of carefully (though informally) selected, qualified (subject matter and job experience) team members to make judgments about institutions and programs. So it seems that there was no evidence a decade ago that accrediting agencies extensively used formal training programs for evaluators which were designed to increase team skills through enhanced knowledge and practice. The training was and apparently largely still is (this requires verification through systematic current study) informal, "conducted" through printed materials and on-site, on-the-job, guided or unguided experiences. (Kells, 1980a:2-4)

In September 1979, Kells was engaged by WASC to evaluate their training of chairpersons and team members. WASC had completed a revision of their standards and received a grant to fund the training sessions. The report reviews the context of the training, goals, procedures, and finally the evaluation of the project.

Workshops were held for team chairpersons. Also, observers were sent to view the on-site training of team members. In each case the participants were asked to evaluate the training sessions and make suggestions for improving them. The responses of the chairpersons and trainers are of particular importance but are too lengthy to include in this survey of the literature. However, it is significant to note:

> Twenty-five percent of the chairpersons reported that their attempt to orient the team members on-site could only be rated 'fair' or 'poor' in effectiveness. Over two-thirds reported that more 'hands-on' training experiences were 'perhaps' or surely necessary. . .more practice was needed. (Kells, 1980a:16-17)

Kells reports that a second training session for chairpersons was held in October, 1980, designed to elicit the chairpersons' reflections on the past year's experiences and to pull together suggestions for improving the WASC standards and evaluator training. At its conclusion, the Executive Director announced that several changes would be implemented for the following year:

1. that separate training sessions would be instituted for first-time team members;

2. that periodic chairperson seminars would be held as needed;

3. that training materials would be developed as funds and time permitted so that the training workshops could be based in part on case materials, films, simulations and other means which enable "hands-on" practice for the participants;

4. that the WASC Commission will attempt to assure that the preliminary visit to an institution made by the team's chairperson will be made at a time which enables a review of the self-study report in draft form;

5. that consideration will be given to the possibility of producing a small handbook for team chairpersons and team members;

6. that the on-site team member orientation sessions will be retained, improved and held on the afternoon of the first day of the visit (a change in terminology);

7. that the WASC accreditation standards will be reviewed during 1980-81 and enhanced where needed in light of the useful suggestions provided by the chairpersons and through the instruments employed in this evaluation project. (Kells, 1980a:24-25)

This report is extensive, includes appendices, and is worthy reading for all who have responsibilities for training team members and chairpersons.

Madaus, et al. (1983) are critical of the present practice of evaluating a school. While stating that within the present framework good evaluation can be done, they feel that a good evaluation is rare rather than the norm. Their criticisms include: the association's handbooks of standards which are "usually a mishmash ranging from the trivial to the really important, and there is usually no weighting suggested;" the self-study is devoted to a review of the institution's goals in light of their mission statement which "tends to include the usual managerial biases;" and the team of external assessors is usually picked from volunteers and consequently "professional evaluators. . .administrative analysts and consultants are more or less automatically excluded." (Madaus, 1983:250-251) Although the authors endeavor to make a case for the inclusion of professional evaluators on accreditation teams, this is not a common practice and it would seem to be cost prohibitive for most programs. This text, however, should be read by everyone with leadership responsibilities in the accreditation arena.

In 1979, the KAPPAN, published an article by George Arnstein, titled, "Two Cheers For Accreditation." After reviewing the historical and contemporary purposes of accreditation, Arnstein discusses seven weaknesses which he feels "undermine accreditation as a reliable indicator of quality." (Arnstein, 1979:358) The sixth weakness is "Leadership":

> There continue to be energetic and talented leaders in accreditation ... there are also persistent criticisms that leadership has fallen short. Roger Heyns, while president of the American Council on Education, noted critically that 'by and large, the process of accreditation, its policies and its procedures, have not had the attention of the first team.'

> In addition, there is the welcome tradition of amateurism that emphasizes the voluntary contribution of scholars and administrators to the maintenance of their own systems. It also is a weakness, because it leaves so much to the amateurs who make up the evaluation teams and who serve on the various accrediting commissions. (Arnstein, 1979:359)

Arnstein seems to embrace the criticism of Madaus, Scriven and Stufflebeam (though written several years earlier) that the evalution process would be strengthened by the presence of professional evaluators. At the same time, however, he defends the value of the "volunteer amateurs" on the team. He continues this dialogue into the seventh weakness which he terms, "State of the Art." In short, he deplores the fact that there is "A massive problem in our inadequate knowledge of institutional and program evaluations." (Arnstein, 1979:359) To illustrate this Arnstein presents the following scenario. Although it describes the college scene, it is applicable to elementary and especially secondary school accreditation.

> The problem is compounded by the emphasis on pluralism, on the variety of American educational institutions, which makes it very difficult to reduce uncommon colleges to a common denominator. How do you compare a conservative, traditional curriculum like St. John's College (Great Books) with the more permissive goals of Goddard or Antioch? All award bachelor of arts degrees, all emphasize the liberal arts, all are regionally accredited; but they intend to be different and in fact are quite different.
>
> American education, by its very values and traditions, emphasizes progress toward each institution's own goals and objectives; this precludes the widespread use of absolute criteria. (Arnstein, 1979:359)

This is the challenge facing accrediting agencies today -- how to encourage diversity and evaluate for purposes of accreditation without requiring adherence to absolute criteria and standards. This is without doubt the most difficult task in training evaluators. Arnstein, however, confirms that accrediting

associations are endeavoring to raise the performance levels by increased efforts to train team members and by preparing competent manuals.

When researching the publications and practices of the six regional accrediting associations it is immediately apparent that the concentration of effort has been on postsecondary accreditation, presumably because of the coordination efforts and demands of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the oldest of the regionals, was the first to establish minimum standards. It published the first list of accredited schools in 1913. The youngest is the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, founded in 1962. Historically these associations dealt primarily with secondary and post-secondary institutions. However, the Southern Association began to accredit elementary schools in 1961. North Central introduced their elementary program in 1975. The New England Association is the only one to have a separate commission for independent schools. The addresses and telephone numbers of the Regional Associations may be found in the appendix (Appendix K:209).

The practicum manager has studied the publications of all of these associations. There are many commonalities such as narrative descriptions of the (1) role of the chairperson; (2) role of team members; and (3) overview of the accreditation process. Most include a suggested time schedule for a three or four day visit and include at least an outline of the major ingredients of the team report.

Having reviewed the publications, the practicum manager attempted to identify those materials which were pertinent to the intervention strategies in Practicum I and in the MARP study.

The SACS Manual For The Visiting Committee - Commission on Colleges has substantial material for new team members. The chapter on "The Work and Responsibility of Visiting Committees" is particularly helpful. (SACS, 1980:8-26) The sample forms in the Appendix are also very useful. A similar document, though not as extensive, was developed by the SACS Commission on Elementary Schools. It is titled, The Visiting Committee Phase of the Evaluation Process Using the Elementary School Evaluative Criteria, (1982). Again, the appendix contains sample chairperson's letters, forms, and checklists which are quite practical and helpful. In addition to the materials published by the national commissions, the state committees often supplement the manuals with procedural materials pertinent to that particular state. The practicum manager was privy to some of the training materials developed by the North Carolina State Committee. Although much of it is a review of the SACS policies and procedures, the packet also contained materials specifically focused on the use of the new sixth edition of Evaluative Criteria published by the National Study of School Evaluation.

North Carolina, like Florida, holds annual training sessions in strategic locations across the state. Chairpersons and team members are annually certified by attending one of these sessions. Candidate schools and team chairpersons a assisted by the District Coordinators who represent SACS and

the State Committee at the local level. One unique feature of the North Carolina State Committee is the dissemination of update information through a memo titled, "A Word About." Through this medium the committee clarifies specific policies, standards and practices. Two memos of particular importance to this study are, "Ownership of Evaluation Reports" and "Curriculum Guides" (Appendices L:210 and M:211). The appendix also lists a number of SACS publications which have been reviewed by the praticum manager (Appendix N:212).

The North Central Association also publishes a practical manual, A Manual for the Evaluation Visit, 1984-85. The manual is basically in narrative form covering usual topics such as, "The Selection of the Visiting Team," "The Role of the Visiting Team," "Planning the Visit," "Conducting the On-Site Visit," and "Writing the Team Report." An important statement is found in the section on the role of the team:

> The visiting team is charged neither with enforcing government regulation nor with measuring an institution against a uniform set of standards or preconceptions. Instead, it is asked to exercise its collective judgment to access an institution's clarity of purpose, organization of resources, educational effectiveness, and ability to continue to function. The team begins with the institution's own stated mission and purposes. . .and evaluates how that mission and those purposes are being realized. . . .
>
> To evaluate. To advise. To recommend. To report. These are the responsibilities of the visiting team. To fulfil them well, the team's chair and the team's members must see that the visit is as carefully planned and conducted as their report is carefully written. (NCA, 1984:3)

Another important section is the description of the chairperson's pre-visit. Some of the points covered are

1. The team chair reviews the institution's self-study report before or during the pre-visit to determine whether any additional information may be needed by the team.

2. A pre-visit is devoted to establishing the details of the on-site evaluation plan. The chairperson talks with administrators, faculty and students to get a clear impression of the institution, to examine its logistical or programmatic particularities, and to develop a sense of its atmosphere and style so that the on-site team can later approach its evaluation with a minimum of lost time and a maximum of effectiveness.

3. The chairperson also checks on practical arrangements for the visit and confirms appointments. . . . (NCA, 1984:6)

Another important statement:

> Since each team's members familiarity with commission policies and procedures will differ, one of the chairperson's major responsibilities throughout the visit will be to orient the team to the commission's philosophy and practices. . .The team chair must serve as the on-site guide for the application and interpretation of these documents as bases for the evaluation and recommendation of the team. (NCA, 1984:7)

Two additional items which have been incorporated into the MARP strategies are the "Check List for the Team Chairperson," (NEA, 1984:11) and the NCA practice of requiring the chair to send a draft of the report to the school's CEO for review.

> The team chairperson then mails a copy of the draft report to the chief executive officer of the institution, the members of the team, and the commission staff person for their comments and corrections. The draft should be clearly marked on the title page 'Draft for corrections of errors of fact only -- for internal distribution at the discretion of the chief executive officer.' (NCA, 1984:33)

Two additional manuals were reviewed, A Guide For Self-study and Evaluation (1982), and the NCA Guide For School Evaluation: A Workbook for the Self-study and Team Visit, (1976). The latter contains an excellent section on forms to be used by the chairperson and team members.

The ERIC file contains a manual for Team Visitation Guidelines for Wisconsin Secondary Vocational Programs, 1980, by Dale and Klitzke. This manual is similar to the North Central materials and is a valuable resource. The manual has some helpful forms in the appendix.

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools provides annual training sessions for chairpersons. Session One covers the chair's pre-visit responsibilities including making final arrangements for the team visit. Session Two covers preparing for the visit, making team assignments, sub-committee assignments, writing general and introductory statements, and writing commendations and recommendations. Session Three includes suggestions for time management, organizational tips, sub-committee work, and suggested duties for the assistant chairperson. Session Four "wraps things up" with instructions for concluding the visit including the oral exit report, writing the team report and concluding activities. All four sessions are repleat with sample forms to be used by the chairperson and team members. The MSA training material contained an excellent list of "Shortcomings Most Often Seen in Reports." The practicum manager especially benefited from studying this material since the original policies, procedures and documents of ACSI were all patterned after the MSA model. A number of the MSA forms have been included (though revised) in the new ACSI Chairpersons' Manual.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges is the only regional association which has a separate commission for Independent Schools and a full-time Director of Evaluation specifically for these schools. The training session

for chairpersons is built around a case study. Conducted just like an actual visit, the training begins with the arrival at the evaluation site (academy) and a welcome address from the school administrator (host for the training). The training concludes with the presentation of the oral exit interview and a reminder of what transpires after the visit. The NEASC, Commission on Independent Schools, publishes a Manual for School Evaluation, which is the self-study guide for schools beginning this process. It also publishes a brief handbook for chairpersons. Additional NEASC materials studied by the practicum manager are listed in the appendix (Appendix O:214).

The Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges publishes a number of helpful manuals and bulletins for use in chairperson and team member training.

A unique publication by NASC is The History of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools by Fred Stetson. Although this text contains no publication date it was probably published in 1971, since the last date included in the text is 1970. This document chronicles the activities and major decisions of the association since its inception in 1917. It is interesting to note that the association published its first handbook for chairpersons in 1966 -- forty-nine years after it organized as an accrediting association. According to the author:

> The Handbook served to clarify the role of the evaluation committee chairman, providing him with a step-by-step guide to follow in carrying out his duties before, during and after an evaluation. . . . In 1969, the association published its "Instructions to Members of Evaluation Committees. The publication served to improve the performance of

> individual evaluators, and included helpful information on preparing committee reports. Another result was better consistency from one evaluation to another. (Stetson, n.d.:49)

The above is cited by the practicum manager because these statements reflect the goals of ACSI as it endeavors to improve the accreditation process through the practicum and MARP studies. Of special interest is the fact that nowhere in this historical review is there any mention of training sessions or the identification of problems associated with the teams, chairpersons or evaluation visits.

The Northwest Association publishes an Accreditation Handbook (1982), and two booklets entitled, Instructions to Members of Evaluation Committees (1985) and Handbook for Committee Chairpersons (1984). The latter contains an excellent section on, "The Chairperson As a Committee Member" (NASC, 1984:6).

The NASC Commission does not conduct training programs. This is the responsibility of the State Committees. The practicum manager reviewed training materials prepared by the Washington State Committee (1986). The sessions basically explained the association's handbooks. It also included writing exercises. Selections were taken from an evaluation team report, critiqued and re-written. The exercises included writing introductory statements, commendations and recommendations.

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges, founded in 1962, is the youngest of the six regional associations. WASC publishes a number of helpful manuals including, Visiting Committee Handbook Part I: General Guidelines

(1986), Visiting Committee Handbook Part II: Specifics (1986), and Pursuing Excellence: Discussion Materials for Representatives of Schools Being Evaluated." (1987-88).

The Handbook, Part I, contains two excellent sections, (1) "Tips on Being Specific Without Being Prescriptive," (included is a list of good and poor examples) and a "Chairperson's Checklist," which is broken down into; Before the Visit, During the Visit, and After the Visit activities. (WASC, 1986:16 & 22-32) The Appendix has a number of excellent forms. The visiting team's confidential recommendations for accreditation (WASC, 1986:34) has been adapted for ACSI use. Part II (1986), contains an excellent section on good and poor examples of writing commendations and recommendations. This also has been incorporated in the new ACSI Chairpersons' Manual.

Although not an accrediting association per se, a review of the literature would not be complete without reference to the National Study of School Evaluation, a non-profit corporation comprised of representatives from each of the regional accrediting associations. NSSE has been in existence since 1933. Its primary function is to develop and publish instruments for use in evaluating schools and school programs, grades K-12. When an accrediting association does not publish its own self-study guidelines or manual but gives the schools freedom to chose their own self-study instrument, quite often the instrument used is one of the Evaluative Criteria manuals published by NSSE. NSSE does not publish materials on training evaluators, with one exception. In 1979, NSSE produced a filmstrip entitled, "Training Team Evaluators." This filmstrip is

recommended by the Southern Association for use in team training. It has been used by ACSI in the practicum study.

The Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC) grants recognition to accrediting associations which meet a prescribed set of requirements for accrediting non-public schools within the state. Generally these associations are the approximate size and in some cases "age" as ACSI, with one exception, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Having studied the publications of the six regional associations the practicum manager proceeded to examine the materials and practices of a select group (the more active and experienced) of TEPSAC recognized programs. A complete list of TEPSAC recognized associations is included in the Appendix (Appendix P:215). While the preponderance of information was gained through personal interviews, helpful information was also gleaned from printed handbooks and related materials.

The Independent Schools Association of the Southwest exists almost exclusively for the purpose of accrediting private elementary and secondary schools. Since schools are admitted to membership on the basis of accreditation, all information about ISAS is published in one manual, Membership Information 2nd Edition, 1988. In addition to such entries as By-Laws, Code of Ethics and other information about the organization, this volume contains the Standards for Accreditation as well as procedural information for schools and for visiting teams.

The ISAS material is very precise and is an excellent reference. The section on Appeal Procedures (ISAS, 1988:7) was used as the model for the due process policies which are now official and are included in the new ACSI Chairpersons Manual. The ISAS procedures for admission to candidacy are considerably more extensive than the other TEPSAC approved programs. The section on visitation procedures is in two parts, "Suggestions for the Chairman of the Visiting Committee," and "Suggestions for the Head of School." (ISAS, 1988:25-30, 31-36). "The Document of Adherence To Standards" (ISAS, 1988:13-15), is excellent. This is completed by candidate schools and is in addition to the school's Self-study. Preliminary steps have been taken to develop a similar instrument for presentation to the ACSI National Accreditation Commission.

The Texas Catholic Conference has more than 300 accredited schools in the state. Its standards are set forth in the Accreditation Monitoring Guide, 1986-89. The Guide consists of a series of guiding questions and "evidence indicators" are given for each question. It is designed as a dual purpose instrument to be used by the school in preparation for the visit and also by the visiting team in validating compliance.

The Conference has published two manuals, the Manual for Accreditation/Visitation (1986), which guides the school through the process and the Chairpersons Handbook (1986). The latter instrument gives the chairperson a clear picture of what is expected. The section on, "Final Meeting With The Visiting Team" is especially helpful in that it reinforces the confidentiality of all materials, the need to return specific documents to the school, and to collect and

dispose of all notes, written drafts of the report and left-over materials. At least half of the handbook contains useful data gathering forms and sample materials.

The Lutheran School Accreditation Commission, an arm of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Texas District, has published a thorough list of Standards for Lutheran Schools, 1986. This listing will serve as a good model for any organization seeking to develop an explicit list of what a school needs to incorporate into its program in order to be accredited. The Visiting Team Manual, 1986, the Lutheran School Self-Study Report Form, 1986, and Principal's Handbook, 1986, are equally impressive. The team manual has an excellent section on writing styles and samples which have been incorporated into the ACSI materials. The writing samples serve as models for the team's writing assignments which is one of the most difficult responsibilities of serving on an accreditation team. The 21 suggestions for team members (Manual, 1986:5-7), should be incorporated in every association's team member's handbook. The Principal's Handbook served as the impetus and model for the new ACSI Administrator's Handbook. The handbook guides the school administrator through the process. It begins with making application for candidacy and concludes with how to benefit from and apply the team report. It also includes information about the required Annual Report. The handbook makes specific suggestions on preparing for the team visit. The practicum manager was most impressed by an article entitled, "Validating Our Christian Mission: A Guide for the Self-Study and Evaluation of the Christian Dimensions of Lutheran High Schools" (undated). This was prepared by the Association of Lutheran

Secondary Schools and the Board of Parish Services of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. This article will be referred to the ACSI South-Central Regional Accreditation Commission and the National Accreditation Commission, but not until the completion of the MARP study.

The Christian Schools Association of America, also known as Partners For Christian Education, is the accrediting division for the Church of Christ schools in Texas. CSAA is the newest group to achieve TEPSAC recognition. Their materials are all included in a manual entitled, An Accreditation Program of the Christian School Association of America.

The purpose of including this relatively new association in this study is to acquaint the reader with a religious organization which basically took the Southern Association (SACS) accreditation materials and adapted them for use by a much smaller association. The materials are noteworthy and should be studied by all young associations seeking to make improvements in their own program.

One particularly good feature about this program is the "School Improvement Plan." Following the completion of the school's Self-study, the administration and faculty are expected to develop this improvement plan. The plan is then submitted to the visiting team along with the Self-study document. This requirement impelled the practicum manager to persuade the ACSI Regional Accreditation Commission to incorporate an "Improvement Plan" into the ACSI program.

Another document prepared by CSAA is the CSAA Accreditation Training Workshop (1987). The author is a member of the CSAA Accreditation Commission and, having had extensive experience with the SACS program, is the person primarily responsible for chairperson and team member training. Much of the material is from SACS. Three items from this document are of special interest to the practicum manager:

1. Following the visit and the completion of the team report, the school representatives are expected to respond in writing to the team report. Thus, the accreditation commission, when meeting to act upon granting accreditation, has the following documents for each candidate school: (a) Self-study, (b) Improvement Plan, (c) Team Report, and (d) The Institution's Response To The Team Report.
2. The expense voucher is very thorough, including a statement about the reimbursement policy.
3. The schedule for logging and documenting personal interviews during the team visit is an excellent idea.

All three of these have been incorporated into the intervention strategy, specifically the new ACSI Chairperson's Manual.

Two national accrediting associations which are similar in purpose and about the size of ACSI, but which have a significantly longer track record in accreditation are the American Association of Bible Colleges (AABC), headquartered in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and Transnational Association of Christian Schools (TRACS), headquartered in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

The AABC materials have undergone a number of revisions since the association began accrediting Bible Colleges in 1947. The Team Chairman's Instructions (1986), contains some unique features not seen in the materials of other associations. The section entitled, "Characteristics of the Report" (AABC, 1986:19), reminds the chairman (and in turn the team members) of the basic characteristics of the report but takes it one step further in explaining "evaluative vs descriptive," "objective vs subjective," and "team vs individual judgment." Both manuals contain helpful suggestions on writing style in the sections on "Sample Statements" (AABC, 1986:24-27). The appendix includes an example of a "Summary Narrative" of a team report (AABC, 1986:29-30).

The Team Member Instructions (1986), handbook includes an excellent section on "Your Responsibility As An Evaluator," and "Your Work of Evaluation" (AABC, 1986:5-10). The latter has a strong segment on interviewing techniques. One of the weakest segments of the ACSI team member training is the interviewing process. This material from AABC has been incorporated into the ACSI training sessions.

The Transnational Association of Christian Schools was founded in 1979. It accredits schools from elementary through the graduate school level. The TRACS Accreditation Manual is a well organized, explicit document which clearly delineates all requirements and procedures for achieving associate, candidate and accredited status. The section on standards, and the criteria for meeting each, is extremely well presented and is a good model to follow for associations which publish a listing of explicit standards that must be met. A series of

"position papers" serves to clarify specific issues, e.g. "Excellence Through Innovation." The Visiting Team Manual contains an extensive listing of the standards along with the criteria and the methods of evaluation for each. It also contains a "criterion checklist" for each major area being evaluated. This detail is especially valuable for inexperienced team members.

Data Gathering Through Consulting With Others

The process of conducting telephone interviews with every member of the National Accreditation Commission, all regional directors, and each regional commission chairperson proved to be an extremely helpful and practical exercise. As a result, the practicum manager was able to initiate the process described in chapter two which identifies the most essential needs for the ACSI team member training.

An interview with the director of the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS), has provided helpful insights into how a small but considerably more experienced accrediting agency manages the accreditation program. According to the director, ISAS relies more on what is observed and gleaned from interviews than what is written in the self-study document. Because of this, team members are not encouraged to prepare, in advance of the visit, a first draft of commendations and recommendations based upon a pre-visit analysis of the self-study.

Having personally observed an ISAS accreditation visit, the practicum manager gained first-hand awareness of the extent of authority entrusted to the chairperson. This was stated in the interview, but was more completely

understood by observation. In the ISAS system, a person must serve on several team visits before becomming a chairperson and assuming such complete authority over a visit. Although the association publishes a limited six-page guide, "Visitation Procedures: Suggestions for the Chairman of the Visiting Committee," the chairperson exercises considerable independence in conducting the visit, including the writing of the team report. The chairperson collects the sectional reports from each member of the committee and these become the basis for the oral and written reports.

It is unlikely that the ACSI chairperson will be given such autonomy over a visit and over the preparation of the written report. As previously indicated, ISAS has no formal program for training chairpersons or team members. Experience is the only teacher. In a more recent interview, the ISAS director indicated that serious consideration is now being given to conducting special training sessions for chairpersons. This represents a significant change for this organization.

An interview with the director of the Lutheran school accreditation program revealed that consultants receive specialized training for their role in assisting the school in the preparation of the school's self-study. The consultant guides the school staff in organizing for the self-study and steers them through the self-evaluation process. All consultants receive a six-hour training course which is held every year in conjunction with the annual administrators conference. They receive additional training by being assigned to serve as a "captain's assistant" on an accreditation visit. Having assisted the school through the process, the

consultant may not serve on that particular visiting team.

Although ACSI assigns a consultant to the school, little emphasis has been placed on the consultant being an "expert" in helping the school personnel develop the Self-study and prepare for the team visit. This is an area targeted for improvement in the ACSI program.

The Lutheran director expressed concern over the lack of a satisfactory program for training personnel to serve on accreditation teams, a problem which seems to plague all accrediting agencies, especially the smaller or younger programs. In the Lutheran system, chairpersons (called Captains) also receive six hours of training. Team members receive a two-hour course at the annual fall teachers convention, plus approximately four hours of orientation and training on-site, just prior to the visit.

A follow-up interview revealed the following insights into the Lutheran program:

1. There is always a shortage of team captains. After seeing how much work is involved team members are somewhat reluctant to serve as captains.
2. The team reports contain too many recommendations. The teams need to be more selective and concentrate on the major problem areas.
3. The team captain has the major responsibility of assembling the team.

4. Approximately one-half of the team are new. This means that all team members do not go through the fall six-hour training session.
5. The evaluation of captains and team members is done only informally.

A third interview revealed that this association has recently added another step to the process. Within 60 days of having received the team report, the school must develop a "Six-Year Plan" based on a priortization of the recommendations. This must be completed and submitted before the commission acts on the school's accreditation. Since there is so much paper work and reading of self-studies, team reports and action plans, the commission is seeking to hire a part-time person to study and prepare each set of school materials to be presented to the commission.

Interviews with the Director of Accreditation for the Texas Catholic Council revealed that chairpersons are invited to attend an annual, state-wide, full day training session. The first half day is spent on reviewing the standard procedures and materials and answering any questions the chairpersons may have. The second session is given over to problem solving and simulations of situations which may arise during a team visit.

An additional short training session is held within each diocese, the purpose of which is to acquaint chairpersons with the unique school practices within the diocese, select team members, and handle the team member training. Chairpersons also do some on-site training. To coordinate the program, the state superintendents meet five times a year. This is in addition to the

commission meetings. The evaluation of chairpersons and team members is done by the superintendents, but only informally.

Current problems or concerns include: (1) the "Monitoring Guide" is basically a checklist approach to evaluating schools and does not allow for much flexibility or diversity in programs; this is especially a problem for the larger Catholic college-prep high schools; (2) there is ambiguity as to whether schools can be accredited if they choose not to meet all of the standards, preferring more creativity in scheduling and instructional goals; (3) the guide focuses more on elementary education and is weak at the secondary level and; (4) the format for team reports has been changed twice and is in need of further evaluation and modification.

This interview concluded with a discussion on how the association is preparing for a major evaluation of its program. The director believes they will be moving away from the checking of essential elements and placing more emphasis on effective school research and the evaluation of outcomes.

Several other interviews were held with directors of religiously oriented accreditation programs. In most cases the purpose of the interview was to clarify or explore further something that appeared in the associations' printed materials. In some cases the programs were smaller or younger than the ACSI program and most of these associations were struggling with the same or similar problems, thus solution strategies were not available.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEACS) is the only major group to have a separate commission for accrediting independent

schools. An interview with the director revealed that the association conducts two training sessions each year for team chairpersons. The workshops are built around case studies of schools going through the evaluation process. This becomes the basis for discussion and writing exercises. The process is analyzed both from the viewpoint of the visiting committee and that of the school administration. The case study approach is certainly worthy of serious consideration in developing the ACSI training program. NEASC has no program for training team members other than the orientation provided by the chairperson. This is significant when considering the fact that NEASC advocates a high percentage, up to 50 percent, of new members on the team. Once again the philosophy seems to be that team members learn best by serving on a team.

Practicum Outcomes

Three terminal objectives are identified by the practicum manager for the Major Applied Research Project. The MARP has been built upon the information gathered and the expertise derived from the introductory practicum which served as the pilot for this study. Throughout the entire study the practicum manager has continued to delve further into the policies and practices developed by other accrediting agencies to determine their relevancy and aptness to contribute toward the goal of improving the ACSI accreditation program. When the project began, the following objectives were formulated to guide the action:

Terminal Objectives

A. As a result of the process of identifying and clarifying the ACSI national

and regional policies, standards and procedures, and the placement of this information in appropriate written form, namely, the new Chairperson's Manual, which was first piloted during the Practicum I study (November 1987 through May 1988), followed by a more extensive revision and use by the consultants and chairpersons during the accreditation visits conducted during the MARP intervention period (April 1988 through May 1989), the accreditation program in the South-Central region will be better documented, the process more standardized, and the standards and procedures more clearly communicated than it has been for any accreditation team and campus visit prior to the intervention period. The degree of successful implementation will be measured by a reduction in telephone inquiries from school personnel and consultant/chairpersons, by an evaluation of the follow-up reports i.e. Section 18 of the Evaluative Criteria entitled "Recommendations For Improving The ACSI Accreditation Programs," and by the commission's evaluations of the visiting team reports.

The first strategy was to research, correct, confirm and document all national and regional policies which existed prior to intervention. The majority of this research was completed for use in the introductory phase of the study and all policies were placed in writing. Every attempt was made to remove any ambiguity about each policy. This was followed by the development and implementation of new policies which came predominantely from the interviews and the literature review. The new policies were introduced in time for the MARP study. The more pertinent additions include:

1. Policy 5.4, which clearly sets forth the percentage of teachers which must hold ACSI teaching certificates.
2. Policy 9.6, which calls for a draft of the team report to be submitted to the chief officer of the school for review and approval before the report is finalized and filed with the accreditation commission.
3. Policy 9.8 (a), requires the consultant/chairperson to approve the school's Self-study before it is printed and sent to the team members.
4. Policy 9.8(b), strengthens the necessity for the consultant/ chairperson to certify that all of the standards have been met before the first approval is given for the team to be assembled and the visitation date is confirmed.
5. Policy 9.8(c), gives the consultant/chairperson the authority to postpone the campus visit until the school has met the standards and has completed the self-study.
6. Policy 9.8(d), charges the chairperson with the responsibility of making a final on-site visit to make all preparations for the team visit.
7. Policy 10.3, more clearly delineates the requirements of the Interim Progress Report.
8. Policy 10.4, places two new requirements on all accredited schools. At the conclusion of the first year of accreditation, the school must submit an Improvement Plan to the accreditation commission. In

addition, all schools must complete an Annual Report.

9. Policy 11.0, provides each school with clear guidelines for due process, including complaints, probation, appeal and revocation.

The second strategy was similar to the first and followed identical procedures. It was to clarify all accreditation procedures, beginning with the candidacy process and concluding with the requirements following the granting of accreditation. This, also, was a two-step process. The practicum manager first focused on the existing national and regional procedures which were then documented, clarified, expanded where necessary, and rewritten to be as exact as possible. This material was prepared for use during the Practicum I period. The second step was to complete the literature review and interviewing process, and to incorporate new material into the study. The entire process resulted in a much larger and greatly improved set of procedures for the MARP.

B. As a result of the process of researching and evaluating the policies, procedures and training practices of other accrediting agencies; and as a result of the process of selecting, synthesizing, adapting and incorporating this material into the ACSI training program and chairpersons manual which was first piloted during the Practicum I study (November 1987 through May 1988), and followed by more extensive research and selection of materials to be used by the consultants and chairpersons during the accreditation visits conducted during the MARP intervention period (April 1988 through May 1989), the consultants and chairpersons will be better prepared to fulfill their responsibilities, including the training of team members and leading accreditation visits. The degree of

successful implementation will be evaluated by the responses on the team member questionnaires and by the commission's evaluation of the team reports.

The major strategy for this objective was to develop a stronger training program for consultant/chairpersons. To do so a number of secondary strategies had to be employed. The first step was to confirm the role and responsibilities of the consultant/chairperson. This was done primarily through the study of the literature, by interviewing experienced leaders of other accrediting associations, and by reviewing the policies and directives for consultant/chairpersons which the association (ACSI) already had in place. This study, and consequently the new training program, was based on certain presuppositions such as: (1) chairpersons first serve as consultants and assist the school through the self-study process, (2) chairpersons are ultimately responsible for the success of the visit, (3) chairpersons train the team members, (4) chairpersons must guide the evaluation process, and (5) chairpersons give leadership to the preparation of the team report and are responsible for the final draft of the report.

Chairperson handbooks and many forms were collected from the other associations. Ad hoc committees comprised of commission members and experienced chairpersons were formed to evaluate the materials and adapt appropriate forms for ACSI use. The findings and recommendations were reported to the accreditation commission for final review and adoption. This was a long process and could not be completed during the pilot practicum. Those materials which were ready were included in the initial chairperson's manual

which was the basis for the training program for the pilot practicum. The search for and the adopting of new materials continued on through the pilot practicum and an expanded training program was developed for the MARP study. All of the training materials for chairpersons, the materials the chairpersons will use to train team members, and the forms and materials the chairperson will use to direct the campus visit have been included in the new manual entitled, Chairperson's Manual.

Since chairpersons are responsible for the training of team members, another strategy dealt with determining what team members needed to know in order to effectively serve on an accreditation visit. This process included the surveying of the leadership within the association (ACSI), as well as all team members who had previously served on ACSI teams. The procedure is detailed in chapter two. The information derived from the questionnaires along with the review of training materials from other associations became the basis of the new ACSI training program for chairpersons and team members. Again, the process was only begun during the pilot study and was greatly expanded for the MARP.

Although the MARP expands upon all that was initiated in the pilot practicum, the pilot shed light on new strategies to be incorporated in the MARP. The initial study revealed that greater emphasis must be placed on the role of the consultant. Consequently, this area was strengthened in the manual and in the training sessions. The pilot study demonstrated that the team reports can be improved by making the standard known and by providing samples of what is expected, thus another MARP strategy was the inclusion of a complete sample

team report in the chairperson's manual. This report is to be used in the team training and it also serves as a reference to be consulted during the visit.

Chapter two discusses the continuing areas of weakness as expressed by team members and the Practicum I questionnaires. A MARP strategy was to place greater emphasis on these areas. Also, because of the continuing weaknesses, additional and longer training was imperative. This increased training is discussed in chapter three.

Interviews with chairpersons and school administrators, as well as the literature review, revealed that another strategy for strengthening the relationship and improving the dialogue between school administrators and the consultant/chairpersons was to develop a separate Administrator's Handbook. This handbook will help to improve the communications between all parties -- ACSI, consultants, chairpersons, team members and school personnel. It is also designed to improve the process of preparing the school for the visit by making the administrator aware of the needs of the team, the visitation procedures, and what the school can do to help the team members be more efficient. This new handbook was operational during the MARP study.

C. As a result of the intervention strategies initiated during the Practicum I study and continued in this study, along with a constant analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the team visits and written team reports; and, as a result of the improvements made in the consultant/chairpersons training program as well as the preponderance of materials now available to the chairpersons in the form of the Chairperson's Manual, all of which has been implemented in various

stages over the entire twenty-four month practicum study, from November 1987 through the final accreditation team visit in May 1989, the team members will be more knowledgeable of the accreditation procedure and better equipped to fulfill their individual and collective responsibilities. The degree of successful implementation will be evaluated by the responses to the team member questionnaires, the Section 18 reports completed by the team members, the informal observations of chairpersons and commissioners, and by the commission's evaluation of the quality of the team reports.

The strategies for the third objective do not differ greatly from what has already been presented. The team chairpersons are trained in all areas of responsibility, one of which is the very important responsibility of training team members. Just as the content and length of training for the consultants and chairpersons was increased for the MARP study, the same increases were recommended for training team members. The continuing areas of weakness, as reported in chapter two, were targeted for special emphasis. In addition, greater stress has been placed on writing skills. The Practicum I research revealed that team members would benefit from having their own manual, thus another MARP strategy was the development and use of a new Team Member's Handbook. The handbook contains checklists, sample forms and schedules and other information designed to help the team member prepare for the visit. Since writing sectional reports replete with commendations and recommendations consumes a major portion of the team member's time, the handbook contains a section on writing styles, including samples of acceptable and unacceptable

statements. This new handbook also contains sample pages from a team report.

Intermediate Objectives

A. National and regional policies which govern the accreditation program were updated and included in the Chairperson's Manual. This task was basically completed for the introductory practicum.

B. Ambiguities in the accreditation standards were identified and interpretative material was prepared for use by the chairpersons and team members until such time as the national commission publishes new standards. This also was completed for the pilot practicum. However, there was a continuing need to clarify the audit requirement and some of the library requirements.

C. The training priorities as identified in chapter two have been implemented and chairpersons are better equipped to conduct orientation and training sessions for team members.

D. The format and the essential elements for the team's written report have been established. During the MARP the standards were also set for the team's oral exit report.

E. A Chairperson's Manual has been implemented. The manual includes: national and regional policies, instructions for consultants and chairpersons, forms and checklists, training materials, instructions for preparing the team report, writing samples and a model team report. An initial draft was implemented for the pilot study and a considerably expanded edition was employed in the MARP study.

F. A training program has been developed to better equip consultants, chairpersons and team members. This was initiated for the pilot and strengthened for the MARP.

G. The consultant/chairperson is better equipped to serve as a consultant and give leadership to the school during the preparatory self-study phase of the accreditation process.

H. An Administrator's Handbook has been developed, the purpose of which is to guide the administrator through the accreditation process. This material has also been included in the Chairperson's Manual.

I. A Team Member's Handbook has been prepared to help team members understand their role. Of major importance is the section on writing styles and instructions for writing the team report. This material is also included in the Chairperson's Manual.

Side Effects

As a result of achieving the terminal and intermediate objectives, the following side effects will occur. The channels of communication will be clarified with appropriate inquiries being directed to the consultant/chairperson instead of the telephone calls coming to the regional director, thus eliminating the triangle effect of dialogue from the school, to the regional director, to the consultant/chairperson and back to the school. Once the candidate school has been assigned a consultant, the majority of the communication will be between the school and the consultant.

The team members will experience less frustration in preparing for the on-

site visit. Upon arrival they will find that better preparations have been made by the school and by the chairperson. They will perform their duties with greater confidence, knowing they have been adequately prepared. The writing instructions along with a sample team report will more ably assist the team members in preparing the final report. Team members will also benefit from a better visitation schedule since this study has helped the commission develop a formula for determing the size of the team and the length of the visit.

The school administrator will be better equipped to prepare the faculty and staff for the visit by knowing what to expect. In addition, the regional director and staff will experience less stress in scheduling the visits by knowing that the materials are in good order and the visit will go well, because the process has been carefully documented and chairpersons and team members have been properly trained.

The MARP objectives fit well into the overall goals and objectives of the organization. ACSI is firmly committed to offering programs to its membership which will help teachers and administrators provide an educational program of the highest caliber. The accreditation process helps to lift the school to new heights and new accomplishments. Programs offered by the association must be of the highest quality. Nothing shoddy or incomplete is worthy of being called Christian education. Refining, strengthening and clarifying all aspects of the accreditation program is in line with these objectives. Another goal is to "do all things decently and in order" (I Corinthians 14:40) and to document thoroughly all procedures and programs. The association has a goal of having

its accreditation program nationally recognized. The MARP study will take ACSI one step closer to this goal.

Proposal Solution Components

Solution strategies focused on the three areas targeted for improvement in the MARP.

The first strategy was to research thoroughly and document all approved policies, practices, and procedures; to re-evaluate these in light of regional distinctives and to ratify them as being the standard of practice for the program in the South-Central region. This was done by the practicum manager, by the regional commission, and by bringing experienced chairpersons and team members together to benefit from their experience and expertise. Every effort was made to publish policies and procedures which are explicit, leaving little room for misinterpretations.

The rationale for this strategy was that little could be accomplished without backing up and evaluating what the association was doing and asking if this was satisfactory or if there might be a better way. Due to the confusion in some policy areas as previously indicated, it was a vital step in the process. Involving the commission members, chairpersons, and team members allowed for input into the decision-making process by those who are most affected by the changes. It also serves as part of the teaching process. This strategy follows the Biblical principle that there is "wisdom in the multitude of counsellors" (Proverbs 24:6).

The second strategy was to identify and remove all ambiguities in the

standards. This was done by assembling an ad hoc committee at the national level since the standards are established by the National Accreditation Commission. The practicum manager was a member of this special committee. The committee presented its work to the National Commission and upon approval this information was sent to all regional commissions. The second step was for the regional commission to incorporate this material into the regional program. At the same time, the practicum manager identified other areas of uncertainty or vagueness in the regional materials so these could be addressed simultaneously.

The rationale for this strategy was three fold: (1) to take the "guess work" out of all accreditation standards and published materials, thus reducing the volume of questions that were coming to the regional director, (2) to be sure the consultants and chairpersons are consistent in interpreting and applying the standards and; (3) to assure that the chairpersons are consistent in the evaluation process.

The third strategy was to study the materials of the other accrediting associations and to appropriate those practices which are applicable and which will strengthen the ACSI program. The original research was done by the practicum manager. The selection of materials, adaptations and the incorporation of these materials was reviewed and approved by the accreditation commission before being placed in the new manual.

Th rationale for this strategy was that the association could greatly benefit from what has already been learned by other associations and especially those

who have extensive experience in accrediting schools. It was also important to study the work of younger organizations, especially those which are experiencing similar struggles and frustrations.

The fourth strategy was to develop a training program for chairpersons. This program was designed to take the chairperson through all stages of the process from preparing for the first consulting visit to completing the written team report and submitting it to the accreditation commission. Inherent in the chairperson's training program are the materials needed to train team members, since this is one of the chair's major responsibilities.

The rationale for this strategy was that accrediting associations have a responsibility to train all personnel involved in the accreditation process. Chairpersons will function at a higher level of proficiency if properly trained. Team members will have greater confidence in their chairperson when it is apparent that they know how to plan, organize and lead the visit. The research, as reported in chapter two, shows that there is an on-going need for developing training programs.

The fifth strategy was the development of a chairperson's manual. The manual contains all of the material stated previously in the section on "Intermediate Objectives." The intent was to give the chairperson the tools needed to organize for and complete the task.

The rationale for this strategy was that it was a natural outgrowth of the previous task. It is logical to incorporate all printed materials into a comprehensive manual. If prepared in looseleaf style, it is possible to change

sections or pages without having to reprint all other sections of the manual.

The sixth strategy was to begin piloting the above materials as soon as they were ready and to make revisions as needed. This was an on-going process from the beginning of Practicum I through the MARP study.

The seventh strategy was to develop and document a training program for team members. The initial training materials were prepared for the teams that visited schools during the pilot study. The material was considerably expanded for the MARP. This training is in two phases; the first phase is designed to give team members a broad knowledge of the accreditation program and to help them understand the individual and collective roles of the team members. It is also designed to prepare them for the pre-visit tasks of reading the Self-study and preparing initial commendations and recommendations. This training took place at the fall teachers' convention. The second phase is the more detailed training which takes place immediately preceeding the visit. This portion emphasizes the actual tasks and responsibilities of the team as they evaluate the school and prepare the report. The rationale for this strategy is that team members will function better if properly trained.

The eighth strategy grew out of the pilot study. For the MARP, a handbook had been prepared for administrators of candidate schools. Emphasis was placed on working with the consultant, preparing for the visit, hosting the team and what to expect after the visit. A checklist is provided for the administrator. The intent is to guide the administrator through the accreditation process.

The rationale for this strategy was twofold: (1) a well informed administrator will help to reduce and also redirect the communicative problems addressed previously in this study, and (2) the efficiency of the team will be improved by advanced preparations made by the administrator and school staff. This handbook has been duplicated and placed in the Chairperson's Manual.

The ninth strategy also grew out of the pilot study. For the MARP, a separate handbook was developed for team members. The handbook includes orientation information and some of the printed materials used in the team member training sessions. The rationale was that the team members would benefit from having this guide in hand, especially when making the pre-visit preparations, and would not have to rely solely on notes from an earlier training session. Also, in some cases, team members are unable to attend the fall convention training sessions, or since the convention training is in the fall and some may not serve on a team until late spring they may have difficulty in recalling the particulars of the training session, thus the handbook helps to meet these specific needs. This handbook has also been duplicated and placed in the Chairperson's Manual.

Chapter Five

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

Leadership Dimensions

This study afforded the practicum manager numerous opportunities to apply and develop the leadership skills which were a part of the Appraising Leadership in Education module and which were discussed in chapter 5-A of the MARP proposal. An analysis of this leadership agenda may be found at the conclusion of the appendix (see Attachment A:556).

Recapitulation of the Action Plan

This study was designed as a twenty-four month investigation with the first six months as a pilot practicum followed by the eighteen month major applied research project. Due to the nature of the study, the period of investigation and preparation was more heavily weighted in the first twelve months, since the majority of the materials employed in the strategy components had to be identified, authored and produced before the training could take place. This, by necessity, had to occur prior to the accreditation visits scheduled during the Practicum I and MARP periods.

The objective was to improve the quality of accreditation team visits by providing better training for chairpersons and team members. By focusing on the primary task, that is, appropriate and thorough training of personnel to serve on the accreditation team visits, the association was compelled to review and evaluate all aspects of the accreditation program since it became apparent that every component of the program impacted personnel and their ability to perform

and successfully carry out the responsibilities assigned to them. The end result has been a well-documented and improved accreditation program in the South-Central region.

As a result of the pilot study the program components targeted for development and/or improvement were: (1) the documentation of a complete and accurate set of national and regional policies governing the accreditation program, (2) the identification and removal of ambiguities from the statement of standards which all schools must meet to be eligible for candidate status, (3) the placement, in writing, of all practices and procedures to be followed by the consultants, chairpersons and visiting teams, (4) the inclusion of all aforementioned materials into the Chairperson's Manual, (5) the development of two additional handbooks -- for team members and for school administrators, and (6) the use of the manual and handbooks in training chairpersons and team members.

The first two components, "Policy" and "Standards," had to be processed at both the national and regional levels. The policy component was a three-fold process consisting of researching and documenting all existing policies, identifying the need for and developing new policies, and the placing of this information in appropriate and clearly written form. The task of researching and documenting existing policies was completed by the practicum manager. Experienced chairpersons and team members were contacted to determine their understanding of specific policies and to question them about the need for new policies. An ad hoc committee was given the task of formulating the new policy

statements. Each time the regional commission met, this material was submitted for possible revision and approval. Where necessary, national policies were revised and re-approved by the national commission.

The identification and correction of ambiguous statements which appeared in the standards section of the accreditation material was the responsibility of the national commission. Before bringing this need to the attention of the commission, the practicum manager first contacted all ACSI regional directors in order to include their concerns about the standards. A list was then completed by the manager and regional commission for presentation to the national commission. The practicum manager was then appointed to serve on a national committee which was assigned the task of rewriting the standards.

The procedures component required considerable involvement of the practitioners -- the chairpersons and team members. Sub-committees were formed to evaluate and revise the procedural materials which were originally written as a national standard of practice. As indicated in chapter one, more direct control over the process was subsequently delegated to the regional commissions, thus there was a need to add those procedures which were unique to the South-Central region. The recommendations and writings of the committees were presented to the regional commission for review, adaptation, and eventual approval of the commission. More detailed information about the work of the committees is presented later in this chapter.

Throughout the entire process the practicum manager gathered materials to be included in the Chairperson's Manual, the Team Member's Handbook and

the Administrator's Handbook. These materials included, but were not limited to, all of the information derived from the above strategies. All three documents were constantly evaluated and revised, and new materials were added throughout the pilot study and in the early months of the MARP study. The purpose of the Chairperson's Manual is twofold: (1) to provide the consultants and chairpersons with all the information and materials needed to prepare for and successfully lead an accreditation visit, and (2) to assemble in one document all materials to be used in training chairpersons and team members.

The last component was the implementation of training sessions for chairpersons and team members. The chairpersons' training sessions were led by the practicum manager with assistance from members of the commission and experienced chairpersons. The team members' training sessions were divided into two parts. The training which was offered at the fall teachers' conventions was led by members of the commission who were also experienced chairpersons. These sessions were basically orientation and an overview of team members' responsibilities. Additional training was provided at the school sites just prior to the accreditation visits. The chairperson was totally responsible for the on-site training. It was very specific and geared to the uniqueness of the program being evaluated. More detailed information about the training sessions is reported later in this chapter.

Formative Evaluation Procedures

Formative evaluation was both general and specific. The practicum manager was careful to constantly monitor and evaluate the work of committees,

and to oversee the preparation of materials and the work of the accreditation commission. All committee work passed through both the manager and the commission for evaluation and approval. The chairperson training sessions were evaluated by the participants and also by the full commission. The team member questionnaires were another form of evaluation because these were mailed to all team members and received back within a week or two following the training sessions and campus visits. It was also the practice of the practicum manager to call the chairpersons after each visit to discuss the visit and the contributions of the team members. In addition, every team was asked to complete Section 18, "Recommendations From the Visiting Team for Improving the ACSI Accreditation Program" as the concluding activity of the visit.

The practicum manager was both an observer and a participant in all activities. The only sessions not personally observed were some of the on-site training sessions led by chairpersons immediately preceding the accreditation visits. However, on several occasions the practicum manager had the opportunity to visit informally with team members who willingly shared their perceptions of the materials, training and visits. Strengths and weaknesses of the materials and program were frequently discussed at the regular commission meetings. The materials prepared for inclusion in the Chairperson's Manual were under constant scrutiny and quite often several revisions were necessary before final adoption.

The first training session for chairpersons, which was held approximately midway through the Practicum I period, and at which the first draft of the new

manual was presented and reviewed, served as a valuable evaluation process since it was the appropriate time to "take stock" of what progress had been made and what still needed to be accomplished. This afforded the participants the opportunity to be involved in the evaluation process and to give guidance for the preparation of new materials. The regional accreditation commission met immediately following the training session. This presented another opportunity for evaluation. Another training session was held eight months later when all consultant/chairpersons were assembled at the fall conventions. At this session the revised and expanded edition of the Chairperson's Manual was presented. By this time there was a wealth of additional material to be covered and the time for critical evaluation was insufficient.

Results and Values of Formative Evaluations

The results of the evaluation process have been very positive. Participants at all levels have expressed satisfaction with the materials and procedures. The manual and handbooks have been well received and there is sufficient evidence to state that the process has, as anticipated, improved the quality of the chairperson and team member training, and the quality of the campus visits. The one concern expressed by a few chairpersons was over the volume of materials now incorporated in the final version of the Chairperson's Manual. It was agreed that the size of the manual could be intimidating and thus discourage some well-qualified team members from becoming consultants and chairpersons. The evaluations have sharpened the focus, improved the materials and, perhaps more importantly, given chairpersons and team members an

avenue for active participation in the development and refinement of the materials and procedures.

Interim Reports

During the implementation period the practicum manager and observers met on three occasions to discuss the project and to review the progress. The only unanticipated circumstances identified at the mid-point of the pilot study were: (1) the unexpected growth in the number of schools applying for candidacy, which translated into a higher than expected need for trained consultant/chairpersons to service these schools, (2) the unanticipated loss of experienced chairpersons and team members, and (3) the fact that as many as fourteen schools may be ready for team visits during the next school year, creating the need to recruit more personnel to participate in the training sessions.

By the mid-point of the MARP study the observers agreed that the study was "on course," the strategies were appropriate, and satisfactory progress was being made toward achieving the stated objectives. The observers noted the following changes which were made due to unanticipated circumstances. At the conclusion of the pilot it was determined that team members were in need of their own handbook, the purpose of which was to provide some orientation, in writing, and to guide them in making advanced preparation for the campus visit. It was also concluded that the administrator of candidate schools would have a better understanding of the accreditation process, would know how to work with the consultant, and would be able more adequately prepare for the team visit if these procedures could be capsuled in an appropriate handbook. Both

handbooks are described later in this chapter. As previously noted, one negative unanticipated circumstance was the large volume of materials assembled in the completed Chairperson's Manual. Another was the turnover in chairpersons and team members. Unfortunately, after training personnel and helping them to develop a degree of expertise in the evaluation process, some change jobs and are no longer available or they move to another section of the country. Thus, the need to constantly train new chairpersons and team members was greater than originally anticipated. On the positive side, however, is the fact that the materials developed during this study now make it possible to train new personnel.

Actions to Sustain Morale and Momentum

Due to the importance and urgency of this study, as well as the relatively short period of time in which the study was targeted for completion, there was little need to be concerned about a decline in momentum or morale. All participants contributed enthusiastically and the practicum manager was not aware of any major problems. The following factors aided, to some degree, in maintaining momentum. The work of the commission and committees was never on a daily or weekly basis. Except for the early months when a considerable amount of material had to be prepared for the initial team visits, the group work has been well spaced over the entire study. Seldom did the same people meet for committees or commission work more than once every two months. When meetings were held the agenda was full and a climate of anticipation and accomplishment was established. The practicum manager was

careful to document what needed to be done, the purpose of each task, and how it would improve the accreditation program. Accomplishments were heralded so the commission members could see the "fruit of their labor."

Unlike solving a problem in a typical school setting, this study involved a large number of people from many schools and from several states, all of whom served on accreditation teams. The practicum manager and the regional commission members were the only constant participants throughout the entire study. The practicum manager encouraged the commissioners to accept ownership of the study. This, in turn, kept the morale high and sustained the momentum throughout the study.

Chronology of Implementation Activities

Time Frame. The Practicum I and MARP proposals identified the months of November 1987 through May 1989, as the time frame for strategy implementations. This period coincided with the school accreditation visits scheduled for the 1987-88 and 1988-89 school years. Since it seemed advisable to include in the pilot study all nine schools scheduled to be visited in 1987-88, with the first visit scheduled for early November, it was absolutely essential to begin the research and writing processes as early as June 1987 in order to have a major segment of the new materials ready for the first visit.

Since a number of important activities preceded the formal acceptance of the practicum proposal, the full spectrum of proceedings is included in this chapter in order to present an accurate and complete record of all events and activities which were an integral part of this study. Consequently, the total time

frame, from the initial research through the evaluation process and the writing of final reports, covers a period of 28 months, June 1987 through September 1989.

Implementation Activities

June 1987. In preparation for the forthcoming meeting of the South-Central Region Accreditation Commission, the practicum manager began a thorough examination of the policies established by the national commission. The objective was to verify the completeness and accuracy of all policies on file in the regional office. To complete this research it was necessary to compare the office copy with three other documents, the National Commission minutes, the National Board minutes, and the official Board Policy Manual. A list of apparent discrepancies was prepared for presentation to the regional commission and eventually the national commission.

Since the ultimate goal was to have a complete and accurate record of all national and regional policies, the manager also initiated a review of the past regional commission minutes to search out policy-like decisions that had been made to guide the program at the regional level but which heretofore had not been thought of in terms of regional policies. These were noted for review at the next commission meeting.

The regional commission met on June 13-14, 1987, for its regularly scheduled meeting. In addition to the usual agenda items, the following practicum-related subjects were introduced:

1. The practicum manager reported on the study of the national accreditation policies indicating there were possible omissions and

errors which needed to be addressed. The commissioners concurred and instructed the manager to bring this to the attention of the national commission.

2. The practicum manager reported on the study of past regional minutes for decisions which could be considered regional policies. A special committee was appointed to study this further and a committee meeting was scheduled for August.

3. After a lengthy discussion about past team performances the commissioners were asked to list what they felt were the ten most important areas for training team members. The practicum manager shared the plan to seek this same information from the national commissioners, all regional directors and the chairpersons of every regional accreditation commission; and that this information would be the basis for developing a training program for chairpersons and team members.

4. The subject of inaccurate or unclear statements in the accreditation standards has plagued the commission since the first accreditation visit in 1983. The practicum manager prepared a report (Appendix Q:216) for the commission to review. It was agreed that this also should be presented to the national commission.

5. The commission was asked to begin the process of evaluating the procedural manual (1983 ed.), which at that time had been written from a national perspective for all regions to follow. It was agreed

that this material needed to be expanded and regionalized. Time did not permit further work at this time but the practicum manager was directed to initiate the process and report back.

6. The commissioners divided into sub-committees to evaluate past team reports. The objective was to identify weaknesses and to begin developing a list of "essential elements" for future reports. Since time did not permit completion, this task was referred to the August committee meeting.
7. As a final item of business, the practicum manager shared with the commission the telephone log of accreditation inquiries which had been kept since February. This information was helpful in developing the new training program and Chairperson's Manual.
8. The commission agreed to schedule an extra work meeting to be held in September.

Following the commission meeting, the practicum manager completed an informal telephone survey of ten randomly selected former team members. The purpose was to determine whether team members felt adequately prepared to serve on accreditation visits. The survey confirmed the need for better training. Team member responses are presented in Table 1, which may be found in chapter two.

The practicum manager, in order to determine the ten most important areas of training, contacted, by phone, every member of the national commission, all regional directors, and the chairpersons of each regional

commission. Each were asked to identify the 10 most important areas for training team members. The initial inquiry resulted in 40 possible subjects or skills. To narrow the field to 10, the 40 items were placed on a questionnaire and sent to all participants, requesting again that the list be reduced to 10 (Appendix I:202).

The practicum manager attended the June meeting of the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC). This afforded the opportunity to acquaint the commissioners with the proposed study and solicit their cooperation. All commissioners expressed a keen interest and requested that they be kept informed.

The ACSI regional directors and national staff assembled on June 26-30, for their semi-annual staff meetings. The practicum manager shared the following items. Other directors had the same or similar concerns.

1. The apparent need to correct the national policies
2. The need to expand the 1983 procedural manual and make it more of a regional tool
3. The need to correct the ambiguities in the standards
4. The need to determine the 10 most important areas for team training

The next step was to contact the secretary of the National Board of Directors, who was responsible for the board minutes and the maintenance of the Board Policy Manual. Since the secretary was unable to determine the reason for the apparent discrepancies between the minutes, the Board Policy

Manual and the policies which were sent to the regional offices, it was agreed that the practicum manager's findings should be on the agenda for the August meeting. The Director of Academic Affairs was called and the following items were placed on the agenda:

1. Policy changes and discrepancies
2. Ambiguities in the standards for accreditation

July 1987. A telephone conference was held with the former director of accreditation to share with him the possibility of the practicum study and to get his perspective and counsel. The conference was most encouraging although there was some concern about the degree of control that was now being given to the regional commissions. The practicum manager was encouraged to hold solidly to the standards for accreditation which had been established, to which assurance was given that the national commission did not allow the regions to alter the standards but only the procedures for managing the program, and to accept more responsibility for developing regional policies as long as they did not negate or circumvent the national policies.

The practicum manager compiled the survey information which was received back from the regional directors and the accreditation commission members. There was a clear choice for the 10 most important areas for team training (Appendix I:202).

The next step was to begin preparing the questionnaire to be sent out to all team members who had served on the nine pre-practicum accreditation visits (Appendix A:179). The instrument was first sent to 10 randomly selected but

experienced team members to determine the clarity and validity of the instrument. Changes were made before mailing the instrument to 40 team members. A full description of this process may be found in chapter two.

The practicum manager telephoned each regional director to follow up on the presentation that was made at the June staff meetings and to discuss the policies, standards and procedural items which would be presented in August to the national commission. Most directors agreed on all items and were pleased that someone was willing to work on these problems. Two directors were not well versed on the problems since their regions were not presently that active in accreditation.

The practicum manager left a day early for the national commission meeting so as to meet personally with the Director of Academic Affairs and the new chairman of the National Academic Affairs Commission. The purpose of the meeting was to present and discuss the agenda items. The chairman of the Academic Affairs Commission was also the chairman of the Southeastern Regional Accreditation Commission, and was pleased that these issues would be discussed by the commission. This time was very profitable since it also afforded the opportunity to discuss a broad range of accreditation issues and to compare the changes which were occuring in the southeast with the concerns and plans for the South-Central region.

August 1987. The National Accreditation Commission met at the ACSI headquarters in Whittier, California, on August 1-2. At this meeting the practicum manager presented the following items:

1. The apparent discrepancies between the board and commission minutes, the accreditation policies listed in the Board Policy Manual, and the policy manuals which had been distributed to the regional commissions. Corrective steps were taken which were later approved by the board. Directives were given to prepare a new and correct set of national policies for distribution to each regional director and regional commission.
2. The practicum manager presented the list of ambiguous statements which were in the accreditation standards. A committee was appointed to research and clarify all standards. A committee meeting was set for December. The practicum manager was appointed to serve on this special committee.

On August 13-14, three commission members met with the practicum manager to continue the work which had been started at the June commission meeting. The agenda included:

1. The evaluation of previous team reports (see chapter two, table 3, for the results of this evaluation).
2. The development of an initial list of 21 essential elements to be included in a team report.
3. Continued review of the telephone log which revealed the types of questions being asked by chairpersons and school personnel (Appendix F:188). This information was valuable for drafting new policy statements, expanding the procedure materials and

confirming the need to clarify all standards.

4. The practicum manager provided a list of proposed regional policies for evaluation and rewording where needed. Recommendations were prepared for the September commission meeting (Appendix R:220).

5. The remaining time was spent in reviewing the original 1983 edition of the Policy and Procedural Manual. The following outline was proposed for expanding this material into the Chairperson's Manual.

   a. Instructions for the Consultant/Chairperson

      1) Preparation for the visit

      2) Visitation procedures

      3) Concluding the visit

      4) Writing the team report

      5) Post-visit procedures

   b. Check list for the Consulting Phase

   c. Check list for Chairpersons

   d. Sample letters and forms to be used by the chairperson

Following the committee meeting the practicum manager spent time "polishing" the work of the committee for presentation to the commission at the September meeting.

The practicum manager received the revised and corrected policy work which had been completed at the national meetings. This, along with the regional policies, was prepared for presentation to the commission in September

for final approval.

Telephone interviews were held with the Executive Director of the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest and with the Director of Accreditation for the Missouri Synod Lutheran Schools in Texas.

Letters were sent to each of the regional accreditating associations and the TEPSAC recognized associations requesting a set of accreditation materials including policies, standards and procedures.

September 1987. Of the forty questionnaires sent to previous team members, 29 were completed and returned. The results were tabulated and analyzed (chapter two, table 4). This information was prepared for commission review since it was the basis for preparing the training materials.

The commission met on September 18-19, to continue the task of preparing the new materials which were piloted, beginning with the November accreditation visits. The following tasks were accomplished at this meeting:

1. Final approval was given to the national policy research project. The policies were now ready for inclusion in the new Chairperson's Manual.
2. The commission developed and/or confirmed specific regional policies based upon the recommendations of the special committee.
3. The commission accepted the committee report and adopted the recommended 21 essential elements for the team report (Appendix S:220).

4. The commission accepted the committee's outline for the procedures section of the chairpersons manual with the following changes and additions:

   Section I - National and Regional Policies

   Section II - Instructions for Consultant/Chairpersons

   a. Preparations for the Visit

   b. Visitation Procedures

   c. Concluding the Visit

   d. Writing the Team Report

   e. Following the Visit

   Section III - Forms and Materials

   Section IV - Guidelines for Writing the Team Report

   Section V - Sample Pages From a Team Report

5. The results of the team members survey were shared with the commission. The strengths and weaknesses in team member preparation was noted. The weak areas were targeted for inclusion in the fall training sessions.

6. An outline was prepared for the chairperson and team member training sessions to be held at the fall conventions in Kansas and Dallas (Appendices T:222 and U:223). The practicum manager and commission members were scheduled to teach these sessions.

7. The commission also reviewed the telephone log, to understand the needs of the consultant/chairperson and the school personnel. As

stated earlier, this was most valuable in determining the areas of training and where improvements needed to be made in the materials.

8. The practicum manager requested that a draft of the Chairperson's Manual be ready for the first accreditation visit in November. Since there was a considerable amount of work to be done the commission asked the special committee to continue meeting and recommended that some experienced team members be invited to the next meeting.

The telephone log was completed on September 18th, and the results were tabulated (Appendix F:188).

Telephone interviews were held with the Texas Director of Seventh Day Adventist Schools, the Director of Accreditation for the Texas Catholic Conference, the Executive Director of the Episcopal Schools Association, a Florida representative for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, a representative in the Austin (Texas) office for SACS, the ACSI representative for the Western Association of Colleges and Schools, and a representative for the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

October 1987. A special committee meeting with three members of the commission, three experienced team members and the practicum manager was held on October 16-17. The main objective was to continue preparing materials for the Chairperson's Manual. Items worked on included:

1. Pre-candidacy Check list

2. Consultant's Check list for the first visit -- Meeting the Standards
3. Consultant's Check list for the final visit -- Standards Met
4. Revision of sample letters and forms to be used by the chairperson when making team member assignments and in preparing for the visit
5. Material to be included in Section IV, "Guidelines for Writing the Report"

Considerable progress was made. The writing section was not completed but a committee member volunteered to take it home and continue working on it. Though not yet officially approved by the full commission, the goal was to include much of this material in a manual prepared for the two chairpersons leading visits in November. Fortunately, both leaders were experienced chairpersons and members of the commission, so they were already very familiar with the project and materials.

A personal interview was held with the Executive Director of ISAS, and telephone interviews with the Director of Accreditation for the Lutheran Schools and with the Director of the Private Schools Commission of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

Two training sessions were held at the Kansas teachers convention; one for prospective team members and one for chairpersons (Appendices T:222 and U:223). Special attention was given to the 10 areas of training as determined from the results of the "Team Members Questionnaire" and the types of questions asked as determined by the telephone log. In addition to the work

prepared by the special committee, the practicum manager continued to work on materials to be included in the manual.

November 1987. The training sessions which were held in Kansas were replicated at the Dallas Teachers' Convention on November 2nd. At both conventions the time allotted for the team members and the chairpersons sessions was much too short. The instructors were quite frustrated and had to rush through the material in order to briefly cover the items in the outline. No time was available for questions. In the opinion of the instructors, meaningful training did not take place.

On November 8th, the practicum manager traveled to San Antonio to observe the first team training session using the new materials. The practicum manager visited with some of the team members. They seemed quite pleased with the sessions. Some felt that the greatest problem was knowing how to read the Self-study and prepare the required commendations and recommendations before coming to the visit site. One stated that the pre-visit work had been a complete waste of time and that it now had to be done over again. More specific attention needs to be given to this segment of the training. The training session was evaluated by use of a special form provided by the chairperson (Appendix V:224).

On November 19th, the practicum manager observed the team at work on another accreditation visit. Again, the new materials were used for the training (though not personally observed). The practicum manager arrived for the second day of the visit. All team members had prior experience of serving on

accreditation teams but not specifically on an ACSI team.

The practicum manager assembled as much material (old and new) as possible and mailed it to the chairpersons who would be leading team visits in January. Of the three, one was an experienced chairperson and also the chairman of the accreditation commission; the other two had served on previous ACSI teams and served at least once as the assistant chairperson of a team. Also, one person had been a member of the special committee working on the new manual and wrote much of the section on writing skills.

December 1987. The second telephone log was initiated and continued through the month of July. The purpose was to determine whether practicum intervention has reduced the communication problems brought about by ambiguous and incomplete materials, as discussed in chapters two and three.

The "Team Members Questionnaire" was sent to everyone who had served on the November accreditation visits. The plan was to compare the pre-intervention responses with the responses from team members who had been exposed to the Practicum I strategies, to determine if progress was being made.

After working further on additional materials for the new manual, the practicum manager travelled to Oklahoma City to meet with two members of the special committee. The purpose was to complete the first drafts of sections four and five in the manual, "Guidelines for Writing the Team Report," and "Sample Pages of a Team Report." The work of the committee members, individually and collectively, has been most encouraging. The new manual, though already piloted in rough form, was beginning to "take shape."

Letters of invitation were mailed to 21 chairpersons and prospective chairpersons announcing the training sessions to be held in conjunction with the March Administrator/Board Member Conference. The new (practicum draft) Chairperson's Manual was targeted for review and distribution to all participants. All regional commissioners also serve as consultant/chairpersons. Draft materials were sent to all commissioners to review and, where necessary, to re-draft in preparation for the January meeting.

The practicum manager travelled to California to meet for three days with the special committee appointed by the national committee (see August 1987), to research and clarify all accreditation standards. The committee worked basically from the list of ambiguous statements which had been prepared by the practicum manager. The new statement of standards was prepared for presentation at the February meeting of the National Commission and Board. The practicum manager took the opportunity to present the new materials for the manual to the members of this special committee. One member was the commission chairman for the accreditation commission in the Southeast region. Another was the regional director for California, Utah, Nevada and Hawaii. Both have considerable experience with accreditation and gave the work very high marks. It was of special interest to learn that each region represented at this meeting expressed concern over the few schools and teams that took the time to complete and return the "Section 18", the after-visit evaluation form. The South-Central region had been experiencing the same problem. No remedy was suggested.

January 1988. The month of January was especially busy due to the pressures of several major accreditation meetings scheduled over the next three months, plus the goal of completing the practicum draft of the Chairperson's Manual for use at the March training sessions.

Early in the month, the practicum manager observed the team members training session in conjunction with the accreditation visit to a K-12 school in Fort Worth. This was a good opportunity to bring along a new chairperson who would be chairing a visit for the first time in April, to observe the training and orientation sessions. The chairperson, having served as a team member on three previous visits and as the assistant chairperson on the last visit, was serving as the leader and trainer for the first time. This was actually the first real "test" of the new materials since the chairperson was not a commissioner and had not been on any of the committees. It was the opinion of the practicum manager that the training was well organized and quite thorough. A copy of the outline which had been prepared for the team members may be found in the appendix (Appendix W:226). When evaluating the session the following needs were determined:

1. Better instructions were needed about travel schedules, airport pick-ups, housing of team members, and needs for the conference rooms, both at the hotel and at the school.
2. A statement needed to be written about carefully guarding the time for training so that a disproportionate amount was not consumed by the tour of the facilities and the welcome/get acquainted dinner.

Team members are more concerned about being well prepared for the task ahead than being properly welcomed and entertained.

3. Team members need to be urged to arrive on time and be settled in their hotel rooms in ample time to be ready for the training sessions.

While these matters are only mechanical, they do have an effect upon the success of the visit.

A telephone conference was held with the Director of Accreditation for the Texas Catholic Conference to explore further the type of training provided for chairpersons and team members.

The accreditation commission met on January 14-15. The agenda included the following items:

1. Preparations were made for the remaining visits to be held in the spring. This included a review of chairperson assignments and personnel needed for each team. The commission then reviewed, adjusted and approved the formulas which had been developed for determining length of visit and team size. This material has been added to the manual.

2. The team reports were examined for the visits held in November. One report included all of the new essential elements. The second report followed the new format but omitted four sections; three, however, were due to the nature of the visit. The commission expressed satisfaction with the new standards for the reports and

reaffirmed the decision requiring the 21 essential elements.

3. The work of the special committee was presented. This included:

   a. The pre-candidate visit checklist, the first consultant visit check list and the final consultant visit check list were all approved. The decision was also made to combine these into one check list with three columns for indicating what had been completed by the time of the visit. Space was added for a narrative summary of each visit.

   b. The letters and forms to be used by the chairperson when making team assignments and when preparing for the visit received final approval.

   c. The sample pages which were selected from a past team report and revised to conform with the new writing guidelines were approved.

   d. The section on "Guidelines for Writing the Team Report" was approved. Further revisions may be necessary at a later date.

4. The practicum manager presented the following forms for approval:

   a. Certification Requirements: how the school is meeting them

   b. Sample Schedule for a Three-Day Visit

   c. Sample Schedule for a Two-Day Visit

   After discussion and some minor changes, these forms were approved.

5. The practicum manager presented the work of the special national committee in rewriting the standards. Until the manual Evaluative Criteria for Christian Elementary and Secondary Schools is revised and reprinted, the committee developed a reference guide titled, "Interpretation of Standards," to be used by the regions.

6. The practicum manager reported on plans for the consultant/chairperson training to be held in March. Each commissioner had already received the invitation letter which was mailed in December.

7. The remainder of the meeting was spent on:

   a. A review of the progress that had been made on developing the new Chairperson's Manual

   b. How the manual would be used in the March training session

Following the commission meeting the practicum manager contacted the two chairpersons who were leading visits later in the month to be sure they had all necessary materials and to tell them the newest pages for the manual would be sent immediately.

The practicum manager attended the meeting of the TEPSAC commissioners in Austin. This was another opportunity to up-date this group on the study and to discuss common problems in the respective accreditation programs.

February 1988. On Feburary 5-9, the practicum manager attended the national staff meetings, followed by the national accreditation commission and

board meetings. At the staff meetings a brief report was given and some of the new material was shown. The regional directors requested that copies be sent to them. The Board and national commissions met immediately following the staff meetings. The National Accreditation Commission had a full agenda, so there was little time to give a report on the South-Central region. The commission approved the work of the special committee on removing the ambiguous statements in the standards. The new guidelines, "Interpretations of the Standards" was subsequently approved by the Board.

Upon returning from the staff and board meetings, the practicum manager sent the "Team Members Questionnaire" to all team members who had served on the three visits in January. Also, the filmstrip, "Training Team Evaluators," produced by the National Study for School Evaluators, was ordered for preview and possible use at the March training sessions. The remainder of the month was spent in assembling the manuals and in preparing for the March training session.

March 1988. Nineteen chairpersons and prospective chairpersons assembled for the training session held from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 4th (Appendix X:230). The agenda was divided into four parts:

1. The filmstrip "Training Team Evaluators" was shown, followed by a discussion of the major points in the film.
2. The new manual was given to each participant. The practicum manager used the manual as the basis for the training session, explaining most of the items in the manual and their intended use.

Special emphasis was given to the 10 areas of team training and the areas of weakness as identified by the team members who completed the questionnaires. Time was also spent discussing the telephone calls and types of questions which are asked by chairpersons and school administrators.

3. Special instruction was given for writing the team report including the essential elements. The section in the manual on writing skills was covered in detail. Time was spent in critiquing the samples of acceptable and unacceptable writing of commendations and recommendations. This was followed by the instructor setting the stage for a school visit, complete with some sample pages from the school's Self-study. The participants were asked to write some commendations. Later, the stage was set for writing recommendations. Each time the writing was critiqued by the group. The objective was twofold: (1) to instruct in the techniques of good writing, and (2) to demonstrate a method the chairpersons can use when providing similar instruction for team members.

4. Approximately 30 minutes was reserved for questions and for critiquing the session. Most agreed that a full day should have been set aside for instruction and that it would have been better if it had not immediately followed a two-day conference. Most felt the filmstrip took too much time since it was a bit old and quite general, especially for this group where most had served on team

visits. The group felt that the time spent in going through the new materials was too short and that more time was needed for the writing and critiquing exercises. The manual was very well received. Several made comments like, "We should have had this long ago," and "Wish I had this when I chaired my first visit."

The accreditation commission met after dinner and the following day. The first item on the agenda was to continue evaluating the training session. The practicum manager felt very rushed to cover all the material in the manual. The question was asked, "How much is too much?" -- meaning, how much does one assume they already know, or can read and understand for themselves, without having to cover minute details or actually read pages from the manual? All agreed this is a difficult "call," but it is better to be as specific as possible or else divide the group and teach at two levels, experienced and inexperienced. The commission agreed that the writing session was a good demonstration of how the chairperson should cover this material. A good discussion followed over whether the writing should be taught at the convention training or just prior to the visit. There were strong points for each position. Team members need to know, early in the process, how to write because they start a first draft of commendations and recommendations before coming to the visitation. This forces them into reading the Self-study and drawing conclusions which later need to be verified. On the other hand, a young organization such as ACSI cannot insist that all team members attend the convention training. To date, there has always been a need to recruit team members in the spring who did not have the

benefit of being trained the previous fall; thus the need to cover writing skills at the site training. The commission agreed it would be better to develop its own video than to continue using the filmstrip from NSSE, especially since the purpose of all this work was to develop a program which met the specific needs of the South-Central region. Some felt that the religious or spiritual specificity of the ACSI evaluation program should be included in the video presentation. Further discussion of producing a video was tabled.

The commission studied the team reports from the three January visits and were pleased to find that every report contained the 21 essential elements. Since the pilot study was nearing conclusion, time was spent discussing further expansion of the manual for the MARP study. The practicum manager reported on the literature review and how this would help with the preparation of materials for the MARP. The commission members expressed gratitude for the Practicum I study and the effect it has had on the accreditation program.

April 1988. Telephone calls were made to each of the three chairpersons who would soon be leading visits. The purpose was to inquire if they had any questions about the material. Since they had just been through the training session there were no major concerns.

The practicum manager travelled to Tulsa to observe another training session. The team members were most complimentary of the chairperson and the well organized training. The practicum manager continued with the search of the literature, identifying forms and procedures which may be appropriately incorporated in the ACSI program. A file was kept of materials to be presented

to the commission and/or committees for further work and approval. On April 22nd, the practicum manager met with the three practicum observers to review the work to date and to complete the required report.

May 1988. The last accreditation visit to be included in the Practicum I study was held on May 1-4. The practicum manager observed on the second day of the visit and found everyone busily engaged in the process. Five new team members were on this team so the practicum manager conversed with each one. The responses to questions about the pre-visit training and whether they felt comfortable about the task ranged om "adequate" to "very well prepared." The area of greatest concern had to do with interviewing -- how to elicit information, and how to listen without responding to questions like, "How do you do it at your school?"

On May 8-10, the practicum manager, representing the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission, travelled to Lubbock, Texas, to observe the training and visitation procedures of the Christian Schools Association of America. It is always helpful to observe how another association fulfills its responsibilities. The chairperson for this visit was a college dean. His prior experience in accreditation was at the collegiate level with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The practicum manager had an opportunity to share portions of the practicum study with the chairperson and team members.

The "Team Members Questionnaire" was mailed to everyone who had served on the April and May visits. The practicum manager spent the remainder

of the month preparing for the accreditation commission meeting to be held in June. An agenda was mailed to the commissioners. The drafting of new materials to be included in the Chairperson's Manual continued to be a major priority.

June 1988. A telephone interview was held with the director of the Independent Schools Association. The purpose was to inquire into the "Goals of Excellence" project which was an attempt to address an internal issue in which some members wanted very specific accreditation standards while others felt the standards should be broadly stated, allowing for differences in school programs. Rather than re-write the standards, the association chose to address the standards issue through the "Goals of Excellence" document.

On June 8th the practicum manager travelled to Austin, Texas, to attend the TEPSAC meeting. This presented another opportunity to interact with the directors of other programs about common needs and problems with accreditation. While there, a personal interview was held with the director of accreditation for the Lutheran schools, on the topic of training consultants, chairpersons and team members.

The process of tabulating and analyzing the results of the "Team Member Questionnaire" which was sent to all participants of the nine accreditation visits held since November 1987, was initiated. The results are reported in chapter two.

On June 17-19 the regional accreditation commission met in Dallas. In addition to the regular agenda items, including the granting of accreditation to

five schools, the commission evaluated all nine team reports and were pleased to find that all reports but one followed the prescribed format, including the essential elements (Appendix H:201).

Considerable time was spent in evaluating the visits which were completed in 1987-88, and especially the impact of the new Chairperson's Manual. Since several commissioners had recently chaired visits or were in the consulting stage and planning a visit for the 1988-89 school year, the discussion was most beneficial. Overall, the evaluation was very positive. Several suggestions were made for expanding the manual. The practicum manager reminded the commission that several team members requested (via the questionnaires and also the Section 18 reports), that a separate handbook be prepared for team members. This topic and the need for an administrator's handbook had been broached previously with individual commissioners but needed commission action. Outlines for the contents of the handbooks were approved.

The commission confirmed that it would be better to include a complete sample (model) of a team report in the Chairperson's Manual and that sample pages from this model would be placed in the Team Members Handbook.

The commission viewed a video tape of the exit oral report of an accreditation visit on which the practicum manager served for the TEPSAC commission. Following a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the report, the ACSI requirements for the exit report were reviewed and revised.

The practicum manager presented drafts of several forms to be added to the Chairperson's Manual. The following forms were completed and approved:

"Transportation For Team Members" (Appendix II:333), "Team Member Travel Plans" (Appendix II:352), "Hotel/Motel, Meeting Room and Meal Arrangements" Appendix II:331), and "Typist Requirements" (Appendix II:337). The commission approved the drafts of an "Annual Report" (Appendix AA:237), to be completed by accredited schools and a "Progress Report" (Appendix BB:230), which schools will complete at the mid-point of the accreditation period.

The practicum manager presented a plan whereby accredited schools would be required to develop an "Action Plan" or "Improvement Plan" by the end of the first year of accreditation. This concept came from the literature review and the interviewing process. Approval was given to prepare a policy statement to be reviewed at the next meeting.

The following committee assignments were made:

1. Handbook Committee
2. Forms and Procedures Committee
3. Training Program Committee (for Fall Conventions)
4. Model Team Report Committee
5. Sample Curriculum Guide Committee

Committee work was initiated on the last day of the commission meetings and dates were set for committee meetings in July and August. The meetings concluded with a review of the accreditation visits scheduled for 1988-89.

On June 23-26, ACSI staff meetings were held in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The regional directors were given an update on the work of the accreditation commission.

July 1988. Considerable time was spent on drafting forms and materials to be added to the Chairperson's Manual and the new handbooks for team members and administrators. Also, this was a good month to edit and refine the materials which had previously been placed in the manual. Sample Curriculum Guides and examples of scope and sequence guides were collected. This material was presented to the special committee for selecting and preparing a sample to be included in the manual.

The practicum manager contacted all committee members relative to the assignments which were made in the June meeting. Meeting dates were set for August.

On July 21st, the second telephone log was completed and the results were analyzed (Appendix G:195). The practicum manager continued the search of the literature.

August 1988. On August 1-3, the practicum manager attended the National Accreditation Commission and National Board meetings. One important item on the agenda was the continuing need to clarify the financial audit requirement. The practicum manager presented several pages of definitions and clarifications which were recommended by a certified public accountant and which came from a CPA's manual. This material was approved for inclusion in the Chairperson's Manual (Appendix II:377). The meetings presented another opportunity to keep the national commissioners, the Executive Director and other key staff and board members apprised of this study and the work of the South-Central commission.

The literature search was concluded after having spent approximately 15 months reviewing the materials and practices of other accrediting associations as well as the writings of knowledgeable experts in the field of accreditation. The literature provided many samples of materials to be incorporated into the ACSI program. The practicum manager continued the review process on a less formal basis throughout the MARP study -- always looking for new and better ways to enhance the program.

Telephone interviews were held on August 8-9, with the directors of two accreditation programs, the Transnational Association of Christian Schools, and the American Association of Bible Colleges. The purpose was to discuss several items noted in their accreditation materials and to request permission to use some of the materials in the ACSI manual.

The practicum manager met with the committee for the purpose of preparing new materials to be included in the manual. Two major forms which the committee developed were: "The Consultant's Check List" (Appendix II:294), and the "Chairperson's Check List" (Appendix II:298). These take the consultant and chairperson step by step through the entire process. Though already presented in narrative form in the manual, the commission felt that a check list would be beneficial. Another important form was the "Data To Be Attached and Data To Be Supplied At The Visit" (Appendix II:374). This form gives the chairperson more discretion in deciding what materials should be attached to the school's Self-study document and what should be made available when the team arrives on campus. Additional forms prepared at this meeting were: "Team

Member Agreement" (a simplified contract for serving on a team) (Appendix II:344), "Conference Room Requirements, Supplies and Equipment" (Appendix II:334), "Travel Reimbursement Policies" (Appendix II:351), "Expense Forms" (Appendix II:353), "Check List for the School Self-Study Committee" (Appendix II:318), "The Team Ballot" (revised) (Appendix II:369), "Assistant Chairperson Job Description" (Appendix II:368), "Visitation Check List: Interview Schedule" (Appendix II:360), and "Section Assignment Check List" (Appendix II:362). Following the committee meeting the practicum manager refined the forms and sent them to the commission members for approval. The process of editing the manual continued.

The committee met to begin the task of revising and expanding the teaching outlines for the team member and chairperson training sessions to be held at the fall conventions. The Model Team Report committee also met. The practicum manager kept in touch with this committee by phone.

September 1988. Work continued on the forms and materials to be added to the Chairperson's Manual. Also, the process of editing and refining the manual continued. The goal was to complete the task in time for presentation at the fall training sessions. Telephone conferences were held with members of the committee preparing the training sessions for the fall conventions. The completed outlines may be found in the appendix (Appendices Y:233 and Z:235).

The check list for the team member's handbook was completed by the practicum manager and mailed to the committee members for review and approval. Preparations for both of the new handbooks continued. The third

(MARP) telephone log was started on September 6th. The log was maintained through April 14, 1989.

Telephone calls were made to the committee members working on the Model Team Report. This complete report replaced the sample pages originally included in the manual. The committee also recommended sample pages from the model report to be included in the new team member's handbook.

Team member assignments were completed for the two visits scheduled for October and November. Chairpersons were sent copies of the new materials being prepared for the manual.

The California Regional Accreditation Commission voted to adopt the South-Central manual for use in their program. On September 30th, the practicum manager travelled to California to lead a full-day workshop on the manual for the commission members and chairpersons. The agenda was a page-by-page "walk" through the manual. This presented an excellent opportunity for interaction with evaluators from another region of the country. It also provided the occasion for a group of professionals, who were exposed to the materials for the first time, to react and evaluate the materials and procedures included in the manual.

October 1988. On October 4th, the practicum manager attended the TEPSAC commission meeting. This was still another opportunity to interact with individual commissioners. On the 5th, the manager traveled to Oklahoma City to meet with the committee working on the sample curriculum and scope and sequence guides. Several samples were chosen to be included in the manual

(Appendix II:319). Also, since both committee members were scheduled to be instructors at the convention training sessions, time was spent reviewing the outlines and the materials to be used in each session.

Most of the month was spent preparing for the convention training sessions. Because the revised edition of the Chairperson's Manual and the new Team Member's Handbook would not be ready for distribution, packets of the new materials were prepared for distribution to the trainees with the promise that the remainder of the materials and the binders would be mailed as soon as possible. Failure to have the finished manuals ready for the training sessions was not a serious problem since only one team visit was scheduled for late October and a second visit for late November. The majority of the visits were in the spring. Also, the training "packets" gave everyone most of the materials they would need. The training seminars were held on October 21st, at the Great Plains Teachers' Convention.

November 1988. On November 10th, the chairperson and team member training sessions were held in conjunction with the Dallas Teachers' Convention. Each session was for two hours. Although this was twice the amount of time as was given to training at the 1987 conventions, it was still insufficient. Again, as last year, the instructors covered the outlines in a "once over quickly" manner. There was no time left for questions. This was also a problem at the Great Plains Convention. The materials packets were distributed with the promise to send the manuals as soon as they were ready.

At each convention the practicum manager had the opportunity to meet with members of the accreditation commission to give them an update on the preparation of materials for the manual and handbooks.

The remainder of the month was spent in editing materials for the manual and handbooks. The second MARP accreditation visit was held during the last week of the month. The chairperson was the accreditation commission chairman, so the visit was "in good hands."

December 1988. The "Team Member Questionnaire" was sent to everyone who had served on the October and November visits. The practicum manager traveled to Oklahoma City for a committee meeting. The purpose was to complete the revision on the "Guidelines for Writing the Team Report," to complete the Team Member's Handbook and to work on the Administrator's Handbook. The goal was to have all these publications completed and submitted for final approval at the January commission meeting. The agenda for the January meeting was sent to all the commissioners.

Team assignments were completed for the spring visits. The practicum manager held telephone conferences with the chairpersons of all seven teams to review plans for the spring visits.

January 1989. The first half of the month was spent in final editing of the manual and handbook materials and in preparation for the accreditation commission meeting.

The commission meeting was held at the Dallas office on January 19-21. In addition to the general business, the commission reviewed the team reports

for the visits held in October and November. Accreditation was granted to both schools. Again, the commissioners were pleased with the quality of the team reports. It was noted that some chairpersons have weak writing skills. Recommendations were made for passing all team reports through an editing process, but this would be complicated and time consuming. No decision was reached. It was also noted that teams continue to have a problem with determining what qualifies as a major recommendation. The directions pertaining to this in the writing section of the manual were reviewed and revised. The practicum manager reported that his interviews with members of the TEPSAC commission revealed that other associations wrestle with these same problems.

Policy statements mandating the "Annual Report," "Interim Progress Report" and the "Improvement Plan" were all approved (Appendix CC:243).

The remainder of the meeting was spent in reviewing the Chairperson's Manual (Appendix II:254), the Team Member's Handbook (Appendix JJ:440), and the Administrator's Handbook (Appendix KK:498). All three were approved. Immediately following the meeting copies were rushed to the chairpersons and team members for use in the February visits. The practicum manager called the chairpersons to be sure the materials were received and to discuss the pending visits.

February 1989. On February 10-15, the practicum manager attended the ACSI staff meetings, National Accreditation Commission meetings and the National Board meetings. This gave the manager another opportunity to update everyone on the MARP study and the accomplishments of the commission.

Sample copies of the new publications were presented for review with the promise that personal copies would soon be in the mail.

The remainder of the month was spent in printing and assembling the manuals and handbooks and mailing them to all active chairpersons and to team members who were serving on the spring visits. A set was also mailed to the Executive Director, the Director of Academic Affairs, all Regional Directors and to members of the national accreditation commission. Though not designed for use in the other regions of ACSI, assurance was given that the practicum manager would assist anyone who wanted to adapt the materials for use in another region. The practicum manager counseled with the chairpersons who would be leading visits in March.

March 1989. The "Team Member Questionnaire" was sent to the team members who participated in the two February visits. Regional Council members met on March 3rd, for their semi-annual meeting. The work of the commission and the new publications were presented. The feedback was encouraging but not all council members have been involved in the accreditation program. Counsel from this group has been less than anticipated.

The accreditation commission met on March 4-5. Since there were no team reports or accreditation visits to approve, and since the major task of preparing the manual and handbooks had been completed, the commission spent the majority of the time reviewing past policy decisions and developing new policies to guide the accreditation program. Much of the policy work was a direct result of the information and experience derived from the MARP study.

Since policy adoption requires two readings, the recommended policies could not be officially approved until the June meeting. Of major importance were the recommended changes in how the team reports would be drafted, reviewed and approved prior to being submitted to the commission (Appendix DD:244).

Since two accreditation visits were scheduled for March and the last four visits to be included in this study scheduled for April, this was an opportune time to review the improvements being made in the campus visits. Although the primary focus of this study has been to improve the chairperson's and team member's training programs, the premise being that improved training will result in improved visits, many of the materials prepared for the new manual were specifically designed to bring about change in preparing for and directing the on-site evaluation proceedings. Since all of the commissioners are also chairpersons, the following examples were cited as improvements which have been made:

1. The final task of the consulting phase is to make all arrangements for the campus visit. A detailed check list has been prepared for this purpose (Appendix II:296). Making sure that all arrangements have been made and the needs of the team met is the first step to improving the visit.
2. The chairperson also has a sizable check list to follow which gives specific instructions on preparing team members for the visit (Appendix II:298). Again, the premise has been, the visit will improve when the team members come prepared and feel

comfortable about what they will be doing.

3. The above premise is further reinforced by having prepared handbooks and check lists for the school administrator (Appendix KK:498) and for the individual team members (Appendix JJ:440). Improved preparations have enabled the team members to use their time effectively and to successfully accomplish the objectives of the visit.

4. The improved on-site, pre-visit training is another area which now has more structure and more specificity. As described previously in this chapter, considerable emphasis has been placed on teaching team members how to prepare the team report -- the report being the culminating activity of the visit.

5. The visit itself now has more order and there is more uniformity between visits. Several of the new forms in the Chairperson's Manual were designed to assist the chairperson with organizing the visit, checking and documenting the progress, and keeping the team on task and on schedule. Also, check lists were prepared for team members to use during the visit.

6. An important improvement was noted in the team's ability to assess the school's preparedness to meet the standards for accreditation. (Evidence of this can be seen in the action taken at the June 1989 meeting when the commission withheld accreditation for four schools pending their ability to meet all of the standards.)

7. The previous uncertainty about the format and content of the oral exit report has been dealt with, both by policy and in the "Chairperson's Instructions." Chairpersons are now consistently following the prescribed procedure.

8. The quality of the team report was a major concern of the commission (see chapter two, "Evidence of Problem Discrepency"). This subject is repeatedly addressed and the improvements are noted throughout the study.

April 1989. The practicum manager counseled with the chairpersons who would be leading the last four accreditation visits to be included in the MARP study. These visits were scheduled for late April and early May. The third (MARP) telephone log was completed on April 14th. The results were summarized (Appendix EE:246), and compared with the previous Pre-Practicum and Practicum I logs. The findings are reported in chapter six. The manager also began the process of analyzing the information received on the "Section 18: Recommendations For Improving the ACSI Accreditation Program," which was completed by the visiting teams and also by the school administration at the conclusion of each visit.

May 1989. The "Team Member Questionnaire" was sent to all participants on the April and May visits. The evaluation of "Section 18" reports continued and the practicum manager began the process of tabulating the responses on the questionnaires received to date.

June 1989. This month's activities began with a TEPSAC meeting at which the practicum manager was able to present the new publications, the Chairperson's Manual, the Team Member's Handbook, and the Administrator's Handbook. There was keen interest from all of the commissioners. Several expressed the desire to order copies of the manuals and to meet with the practicum manager for consultation and review of the ACSI program.

The Accreditation Commission met on June 9-10. Accreditation was granted to four schools and four others were placed on hold until deficiencies were corrected. The practicum manager prepared a summary report on the ten team reports for the 1988-89 accreditation visits (Appendix FF:250). The commission reviewed all reports and were pleased to note the improvements. The chairpersons were following the instructions and samples from the manual, and were consistently including all 21 requirements. The problem of determining major recommendations continues in spite of the directions which were revised at the last meeting and distributed to the chairpersons. Considerable time was spent reviewing the policy decisions made during the March meetings The approved policies have been placed in the appendix (Appendices CC:243 and DD:244). The commission spent the remainder of the meeting reviewing the progress which has been made and the impact the MARP study has made on the ACSI accreditation program in the South-Central region.

The practicum manager completed the process of tabulating the results of the team member questionnaires and the "Section 18" recommendation forms. Comparisons were made between the results of the Pre-Practicum, Practicum I

and the MARP studies. Tables were prepared for inclusion in chapter six. The process of drafting responses to the conclusions and projections required in chapters six and seven of the MARP were begun.

The practicum manager attended the annual ACSI staff meetings in Canton, Ohio. The regional directors expressed appreciation for the manuals which had been sent to them. The accreditation commissions of two regions have voted to fully accept the policies and procedures of the South-Central region and to use the manuals and handbooks for training chairpersons and team members in their regions. The other regions were still studying the materials.

The new Director of Academic Affairs, under whose purview the work of the national accreditation commission has now been placed, reported that the practicum study has been the motivating factor for initiating a thorough review of all accreditation practices and procedures throughout the regions, including the review of all national and regional policy decisions. This review process must take place before the national commission embarks on the major task of revising the accreditation manual, Evaluative Criteria for Christian Elementary and Secondary Schools. The revision is scheduled to begin in 1990.

July 1989. The process of analyzing the results and drawing conclusions continued. Particular attention was given to determining the degree of accomplishment of the terminal and intermediate objectives of the MARP proposal, as well as the appropriateness and effectiveness of the solution strategies and the data gathering methods. Attention was also given to a review

of the potential influences upon the study, as projected in chapter three. Unanticipated influences were also appraised to determine their possible impact upon the study. This information is presented in chapter six.

August and September 1989. The process of evaluation continued through the months of August and September. This included considerations for continuing the study, modifications which would be made, and additional applications of the study. The evaluation process also included an analysis of what changes the practicum manager would recommend if the study were to be replicated. In addition, considerable thought was given to what the association must do to raise the program to a higher level of expertise in the process of school evaluation and accreditation. This information is presented in chapter seven.

C. Summary of Accomplishments

The MARP study afforded the practicum manager the opportunity and the stimulus to solidify and enhance the accreditation program in the South-Central region. Leaders within the organization have been made aware of the need to correct deficiencies and to take what had been developed at the national level and adapt it to the distinctives of the region. The national policies governing the program have been well documented. The accreditation standards have been made more comprehensible and are now easier to affirm. The guidelines for writing the team report have been determined and placed in writing. A Chairperson's Manual has been written and field-tested. Handbooks for team members and school administrators have been prepared and published. Training

programs for chairpersons and team members have been developed and implemented. The action components have been realistic and beneficial. The accomplishments of this study have been well received at all levels of the organization and its membership. The evaluation of the results and the implications for the continuance of this study are reported in chapter six.

Chapter Six

EVALUATION OF RESULTS AND PROCESS

The focus of this chapter is to analyze and evaluate the practicum results and processes by reviewing the terminal and intermediate objectives as set forth in chapter four, and assessing the degree of accomplishment.

Terminal Objective A Restated

As a result of the process of identifying and clarifying the ACSI national and regional policies, standards and procedures, and the placement of this information in appropriate written form, namely, the new Chairperson's Manual, which was first piloted during the Practicum I study (November 1987 through May 1988), followed by a more extensive revision and use by the consultants and chairpersons on the accreditation visits conducted during the MARP intervention period (April 1988 through May 1989), the accreditation program in the South-Central region will be better documented, the process more standardized, and the standards and procedures more clearly communicated than it has been for any accreditation team and campus visit prior to the intervention period.

Accomplishments During the Practicum Study

The accomplishment of this objective was analyzed by: (1) a comparison between the pre-practicum telephone log and the log kept during the MARP intervention, (2) a study of the post-visit evaluation reports completed after each

accreditation visit and, (3) the commission's evaluation of the visiting team reports.

Three telephone logs were recorded over the course of the study. The first log was kept during the pre-practicum preparation period, prior to implementation of the pilot strategies. The second log was initiated during the pilot study. Its purpose was to determine whether the strategies would begin to make a difference. The results and comparisons between the two logs are presented in chapter two. The third log was introduced after ten months of intervention and concluded eight months later; thus accounting for 18 months of intervention activities. The third log began on September 6, 1988 and concluded on April 14, 1989. During this time 58 calls were received from candidate schools and consultant/chairpersons. Again, general inquiries about accreditation were not recorded. Table 6 presents a comparison between the three logs and reveals a sizable reduction in all catagories when comparing the pre-practicum and MARP logs. The numbers become more meaningful when considering the fact that the first log included the summer months when few schools were open. The MARP figures cover the months of September through April, a period when the most calls can be expected due to considerable accreditation activity. The 58 calls generated 123 questions. Of this number, 31 questions were appropriately directed to the Regional Director and 92 questions could have, and probably should have, been directed to the respective consultant/chairpersons.

Table 6

A Comparison of the Pre-Practicum, Practicum I and MARP Telephone Logs

Category	Pre-Practicum	Practicum I	MARP
1. Total calls	71	86	58
2. Calls from schools	55	71	49
3. Calls from Consultant/Chairpersons	16	15	9
4. Total number of questions	153	134	123
5. Questions appropriately addressed to the Regional Director	28	33	31
6. Questions which should have been directed to the Consultant/Chairperson	125	101	92

Although the reduced numbers shown in Table 6 are not outstanding, the strategies are working and answers are being found in the new materials. As indicated in chapter three, old habits are hard to change, and it is always easier to call the director than to study the Manual.

Table 7 compares the most frequently asked questions from the first log with the frequency of the same questions in the MARP log. Gains have been made in 11 out of 14 areas although some gains are rather slim. As school personnel and consultant/chairpersons develop more familiarity with the materials, it is expected that the gains will increase. The increased number of questions about the consultant is attributed to a greater awareness of the consultant's role as presented in the Administrator's Handbook. Several calls dealt with not having heard from the consultant. The sample curriculum guides generated questions about whether schools had to change their guides if they

did not follow the recommended format. The complete MARP telephone log is included in the appendix (Appendix EE:246).

Table 7

A Comparison of the Pre-Practicum Telephone Log With the MARP Intervention Log

Questions Pertaining to Aspects of the the Accreditation Process	*Frequency*	
	Pre-Practicum	*MARP*
1. *Meeting the Bible requirements*	14	6
2. *Meeting the Certification requirements*	22	12
3. *Cooperative Visits*	6	4
4. *Curriculum Guides*	4	5
5. *Consultant's role*	3	8
6. *Facilities*	7	3
7. *Library*	15	6
8. *Personnel*	8	4
9. *Philosophy statement or requirement*	9	5
10. *Policy Manual*	3	4
11. *School Board*	7	6
12. *Self-Study*	8	5
13. *TEPSAC*	7	5
14. *Team visit*	13	9
15. *Other*	27	41
TOTALS	153	123

The post-visit evaluation forms ("Section 18, Recommendations For Improving the ACSI Accreditation Program"), completed at the conclusion of each visit during the pilot study revealed a need for assistance in the following areas: Chairperson and Team Member Recommendations:

1. The school should be required to send the Self-study to team members at least six weeks prior to the visit.
2. Team members should be allowed to write in the school's Self-study.

3. A sample of a completed team report should be available for the team to follow.
4. Teams should have fewer first-time members, and more experienced team members.
5. More help is needed in knowing the purpose of, and how to write, the Section Preface Statement.
6. The "Instructions for Chairpersons" should be made into a check list.
7. Administrators need more direction on what to send to the chairperson and team members.
8. Samples of acceptable curriculum guides and scope & sequence documents are needed.
9. A statement should be made about acceptable dress for the visits.
10. Team members should have a handbook of instructions.

School Administrator Recommendations:

1. More check lists are needed to guide the administrator through the process.
2. A handbook with more logistical information is needed for administrators.
3. More consultant help is needed, especially for beginning the self-study.
4. More information is needed for meeting the ACSI requirements for curriculum guides and scope & sequence.

The same post-visit evaluation form was completed at the conclusion of each MARP accreditation visit. The following recommendations were made:

1. An instrument is needed for evaluating team members.
2. Provide a check list of items which should be found in the school's personnel files.
3. The samples of curriculum guides need to be improved.
4. The instructions for completing Section 18 are not clear; whether to be done individually or collectively.
5. All new team members should be given a copy of the Evaluative Criteria for Christian Elementary and Secondary Schools.
6. More help is needed on how to interview.
7. The procedures for arranging interviews with faculty and staff should be clarified.
8. The Administrator's Handbook should include a strong statement about numbering the Self-study pages.
9. The Chairperson's Manual needs to be more specific on the team voting (for or against recommending accreditation). What are the options and the ramifications or consequences of each option?
10. For large schools, a four-day visit should be an option.
11. The Self-study should be in the hands of the team members at least four weeks before the visit.
12. Writing commendations and recommendations in advance seems futile. Formulating questions would be more practical.

13. The Self-study should identify the persons who chaired the committees for every section to facilitate the team's work when needing a clarification or interpretation.

14. The team should have on hand a copy of the Evaluative Criteria.

15. More clarification is needed for choosing major recommendations.

School Administrator Recommendations:

1. The self-study guide should be made available in software for schools wishing to use word processing.

2. The formula for determining teacher full-time equivalency for meeting the ACSI certification requirements, should be more specific.

3. The team report should be sent to the school earlier.

A comparison between the two sets of recommendations reveals that good progress has been made in meeting the needs of the team members and school officials. On the recommendations received prior to the MARP study, items 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 have all been accomplished. Also, on the administrator's list, items 1, 2, and 4 were included in the new publications. When analyzing the MARP set of recommendations, the majority are new, with the following exceptions:

1. There is a continuing need to be sure the Self-study is mailed to the team members at least four weeks before the visit. (This directive appears in the "Chairperson's Check List" and is the chairperson's responsibility to enforce.)

2. Team members continue to express the desire for more training in the techniques of interviewing.
3. School administrators desire more help from their consultant.
4. Although the samples of curriculum guides were added to the Chairperson's Manual, some feel that "better" samples need to be used.
5. Although the guidelines for selecting major recommendations appear in the Chairperson's Manual, visiting teams continue to need more assistance in this area.

An evaluation of the visiting Team Reports confirms that progress has been made in communicating a standard for writing the reports. In preparation for the practicum, the accreditation commission identified 21 essential elements to be included in every report. This information was communicated to chairpersons by means of the Chairperson's Manual and the training sessions.

During the combined pilot practicum and MARP 19 accreditation visits were completed and reports written. These reports were evaluated by the practicum manager and a report was prepared for the commission (Appendices H:201 and FF:250). The commission also evaluated the reports and compared them with the nine pre-intervention reports. (The process is described in chapters two and five). Excellent progress has been made. Every report but one included all of the essential elements. The one exception was a unique visit for which the report was justifiably different from the others.

The evaluation processes verify that the goal of the first objective has been accomplished. The accreditation program in the South-Central region of ACSI is now well-documented, and more effectively communicated through the written materials and in the training sessions.

Terminal Objective B Restated

As a result of the process of researching and evaluating the policies, procedures and training practices of other accrediting agencies; and as a result of the process of selecting, synthesizing, adapting and incorporating this material into the ACSI training program and Chairperson's Manual which was first piloted during the Practicum I study (November 1987 through May 1988), and followed by more extensive research and selection of materials to be used by the consultants and chairpersons on the accreditation visits conducted during the MARP intervention period (April 1988 through May 1989), the consultants and chairpersons will be better prepared to fulfill their responsibilities, including the training of team members and leading accreditation visits.

Accomplishments During the MARP

The accomplishment of this objective was assessed by the responses on the "Team Member Questionnaire" and by the commission's evaluation of the reports written by the visiting teams. The improvements in the team reports, cited above in the analysis of objective A, give strong evidence that the materials included in the Chairperson's Manual and which were used in the training of chairpersons, and subsequently the training of team members, have achieved the

desired results. The section on "Writing Skills" as well as the Sample Team Report has made the report standard eminently clear and the teams are now preparing reports accordingly. The accreditation commission is gratified by the quality of reports now being received.

The fact that consultants and chairpersons are being better trained and consequently are able to provide more adequate training for team members, is evidenced by the following survey results.

Having already completed two surveys of former team members, the results of which are recorded in chapter two, the identical questionnaire was sent to all 82 team members who served on accreditation visits during the MARP study. Seventy-six were completed, giving a 92.6 percent of return. When compared with the first pre-practicum survey, the numbers have changed substantially.

As stated in chapter two, an average score, for the purpose of this study, was considered to be inadequate. By placing the average and below average scores together, the first survey revealed that 21 out of 29 team members (72.4%) reported that the training program needed to be improved. The MARP survey reveals that 12 out of 76 team members (15.8%) are still dissatisfied, but that 64 (84.2%) rated the team training as being above average. When grouping the average scores with the above average scores, only two team members were dissatisfied and 74 (97.4%) reported that they had been adequately prepared for the visit. The individual team member responses to the survey may be found in the appendix (Appendix GG:251). An analysis of the responses to each question

is also in the appendix (Appendix HH:253). A comparison of the three team member surveys is presented in Table 8.

Table 8

A Comparison of Three Team Member Surveys to Determine the Adequacy of Team Member Training

Questionnaire Survey	TOTAL INDIVIDUAL SCORES IN EACH RANGE (1-3) Average & Below	(4-5) Above Average	(1-2) Below Average	(3-5) Average & Above
Pre-Practicum				
Responses	21	8	10	19
Percent	72.4	27.6	34.5	65.5
Practicum I				
Responses	12	33	2	43
Percent	26.7	73.3	4.4	95.6
MARP				
Responses	12	64	2	74
Percent	15.8	84.2	2.6	97.4

Tables 9 and 10 present the responses to each question and compare the pre-practicum responses with the MARP responses. Since Table 9 reflects the combination of scores used throughout this study (grouping the average and below average scores together), it is important to focus on the results shown in this table. The above average column reveals that increases have been made in all areas. However, the skill of interviewing continues to be the major weakness. The skill of learning to evaluate the school's Self-study is also in need of more training. When studying the "average and below" column, it is important to note that improvement has been made in 8 out of 11 skills, but the skill of evaluating the Self-study, organization of time, and interviewing still need considerable attention.

Table 9

A Comparison of the Responses from the Pre-practicum and MARP Surveys: Average Scores Grouped with Below Average Scores

	Questions [1]	Pre-Intervention		MARP Intervention	
		Average & Below (1-3)	Above Avg. (4-5)	Average & Below (1-3)	Above Avg. (4-5)
1.	Knowledge of Standards	23	6	19	57
2.	Knowledge of Process (sequence)	17	15	14	62
3.	Evaluation of Self-Study	24	5	37	39
4.	Role as a Team Member	19	10	12	64
5.	Organization of Time	11	18	16	60
6.	How to Evaluate	14	15	8	68
7.	How to Interview	25	4	44	32
8a.	How to Write	19	10	15	61
8b.	Samples of Reports	19	10	13	63
9.	Evaluating Philosophy & Purpose	18	11	12	64
10.	Evidence of Biblical Distinctives	17	12	17	59
	TOTALS	206	116	207	629

[1] The complete questions may be found in Appendix A:179

Table 10

A Comparison of the Responses from the Pre-practicum and MARP Surveys: Average Scores Grouped with Above Average Scores

	Questions [1]	Pre-Intervention		MARP Intervention	
		Below Avg. (1-2)	Average & Above (3-5)	Below Avg. (1-2)	Average & Above (3-5)
1.	Knowledge of Standards	14	15	4	72
2.	Knowledge of Process (sequence)	11	18	5	71
3.	Evaluation of Self-Study	16	13	20	56
4.	Role as a Team Member	9	20	1	75
5.	Organization of Time	6	23	4	72
6.	How to Evaluate	5	24	1	77
7.	How to Interview	22	7	18	59
8a.	How to Write	15	14	3	73
8b.	Samples of Reports	18	11	5	71
9.	Evaluating Philosophy & Purpose	8	21	2	74
10.	Evidence of Biblical Distinctives	10	19	4	72
	TOTALS	134	185	67	769

[1] The complete questions may be found in Appendix A:179

By examining the data and applying the knowledge the practicum manager had about the chairpersons and the members on each team, the manager has drawn the following conclusions:

1. Even the best of chairpersons do not always receive high evaluations. The data revealed that one of the chairpersons who had a direct influence on the development of the model sample report received some of the lowest scores on the question about team members having access to a sample team report.
2. The pressures or uniqueness of the visit can cause the chairperson to stress particular aspects of the visit (in the training) to the neglect of other points. This was particularly noticed on the evaluation of one visit.
3. The evaluation is negatively affected when the school is late in getting the Self-study to the team members.
4. Some people are naturally more critical or more perfectionistic than others. Three respondents gave no scores higher than "average."
5. First time team members generally give lower scores. Of the 12 team members who rated the training as being "average or below," eight were serving on a team for the first time. Also, all eight were unable to attend the training session at the fall conventions. Five additional team members gave 5 out of 11 scores in the "average and below" range. Three of these were new and had not attended the convention training.

6. New team members struggle the most with how to evaluate the Self-study prior to the campus visit.
7. When the majority of team members were experienced and had attended other training sessions, the chairpersons tended to omit some of the training items specifically listed on the questionnaire, thus the respondents gave negative scores for these areas.
8. Some chairpersons who spoke highly of the competency level of their teams actually received some of the lower scores on the questionnaire.

The above conclusions are important discussion points to be included in the next chairpersons' training session.

Terminal Objective C Restated

As a result of the intervention strategies initiated during the Practicum I intervention and continued in this study, along with a constant analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the team visits and written team reports; and, as a result of the improvements made in the consultant/chairpersons training program as well as the preponderance of materials now available to the chairpersons in the form of the Chairperson's Manual, all of which has been implemented in various stages over the entire twenty-four month Practicum/MARP study, from November 1987 through the final accreditation team visit in May 1989, the team members will be more knowledgeable of the accreditation procedure and better equipped to fulfill their individual and collective responsibilities.

Accomplishments During the MARP

The accomplishment of this objective was evaluated by the team member responses on the questionnaires, the "Section 18" reports completed at the conclusion of each visit, the commission's evaluation of the team reports, and the informal observations of the chairpersons, commissioners and practicum manager.

Each of the evaluation instruments listed above have already been analyzed in addressing objectives A and B. The results are equally applicable to evaluating objective C. The strongest evidence of team member competency and the adequacy of the new training program, is the fact that 97.4 percent of the team members gave the training an average and above rating and 84.2 percent gave the program a solid above average rating. When looking at the total responses from all team members on all questions, 769 out of a possible 836 scores were in the average and above catagory and 629 out of 836 were in the above average range.

Chairpersons who have been leading ACSI accreditation visits since the pre-practicum days frequently remarked on the increased level of competency of the team members. Commission members view the improvements through the finished product -- the team report. The practicum manager had the opportunity of interacting with participants at all levels and has received exceptionally positive feedback. There is still more work to be done on each of the objectives, but in the 28 months of research, preparation and intervention, the ACSI accreditation program has taken an important step forward.

Intermediate Objectives

The accomplishment of each of the intermediate objectives is described in detail in the earlier chapters. A summary list of the completed objectives follows:

A. The national policies have been updated, corrected and placed in the Chairperson's Manual.

B. The regional policies have been sufficiently developed, properly identified, and placed in the Chairperson's Manual.

C. The ambiguities in the accreditation standards have been corrected and interpretive material disseminated.

D. Training priorities for chairpersons and team members have been identified and implemented.

E. The essential elements for the team report and the sequence for writing and approving the report have been established.

F. The Chairperson's Manual has been printed and distributed to all consultants and chairpersons.

G. The Team Member's Handbook has been printed and distributed to team members when assigned to an accreditation team.

H. The Administrator's Handbook has been printed and distributed to the chief school officer of all candidate schools.

I. Team member and chairperson training sessions have been held and the new training materials have been implemented.

J. The consultant is better equipped to guide the school through the self-study process.

K. The regional commission has become more involved in developing the regional program and less dependent upon the national commission.

Side Effects

As a result of achieving the terminal and intermediate objectives, the following side effects have occured. The channels of communication have improved. The regional director is receiving fewer telephone calls and questions are more appropriately directed to the consultant/chairpersons. School administrators are becoming less dependent upon the regional director and more dependent upon the consultant to assist them through the self-study process and in making preparations for the team visit. Team members have more confidence in the program by finding that it is well-documented, that the instructional and sample materials are well-organized in manuals and handbooks, that the chairpersons provide meaningful instruction, and that they have carefully prepared for the visit. School administrators have a better understanding of the accreditation requirements and procedures, and are better equipped to lead the staff through the process. The requirements for the exit report have been articulated. The process for completing and approving the team report has been placed in writing. Furthermore, the post-visit requirements are now prescribed by policy.

Conclusions

A considerable amount of information about the accreditation program has been assembled in a short period of time. Every effort was made to get the new

materials ready before the first team training session and accreditation visit of the MARP intervention period. The Chairperson's Manual was piloted during the Practicum I study and a substantially expanded edition was published for the MARP. The standardization of forms and materials brought order, continuity and uniformity to the training sessions, the school visits and the team reports. This has given the commission reasonable assurance that all school visits will be conducted according to a planned format and that all schools will receive the same thorough review. The MARP study has given an accurate assessment of what can be accomplished through the application of appropriate solution strategies.

Appropriateness and Effectiveness of Solution Strategies.

Data Gathering and Implementation Design

Seven strategies listed in chapter four were a result of the probable causes identified in chapter two, and two strategies were added as a result of the pilot study. The need was to take a young program which was struggling for its own identity and which had done very little by way of training chairpersons and team members, and develop a plan which would bring the program to its full potential. The appropriateness and effectiveness of the solution strategies, data gathering methods, and implementation design was confirmed by the positive results achieved. Each of the nine strategy components presented in chapter four proved to be profitable to the study and were important links in the implementation design. The design was effective in that each strategy systematically moved the project toward its ultimate goal of improving the

accreditation visits by developing a viable training program for chairpersons and team members.

The data gathered throughout the practicum study proved to be extremely helpful in designing the manuals and training programs. For example, several guiding principles were established and/or confirmed from the review of the literature. Kells (1979) confirmed that the team chairperson is the most important factor in the effectiveness of an evaluation team and visit. For this reason the greatest amount of effort has been placed on properly equipping and training the chairpersons. Kelis (1980b) confirmed that schools need on-site assistance by a consultant who knows the accreditation program and who can guide the school through the self-study process. The material in the Educational Record (Spring 1972) was most helpful in reviewing and writing policy statements as well as for developing explicit guidelines for complaints and due process. The materials published by the North Carolina Office of SACS, confirmed that the chairperson is responsible for correctly interpreting and applying the association's policies and procedural requirements.

Further examples of data found in the literature which guided the practicum manager and the commission in developing procedural materials for the new Chairperson's Manual are too numerous to list. The majority of the forms, sample letters, check lists, writing instructions, and examples of acceptable and unacceptable writing all came from the literature study. The seed thoughts for the new regional policies developed during practicum implementation also came from the literature and from interviews. The results achieved attest to the validity

of the data.

The most effective tool in appraising the effectiveness of the instruments used in obtaining data and in evaluating progress was the "Team Member Questionnaire." This document gave the practicum manager immediate feedback which enabled the manager and the commission to monitor progress and meet specific needs throughout the study. The least effective tool was the information received on the "Section 18" reports. These reports were difficult to get. They were written at the conclusion of the visit when the team members were exhausted; and it was viewed as one more thing that had to be done before everyone could go home. Although the reports contained valuable information, in most cases they were hurriedly written, the recommendations were brief, and most did not reflect the depth of thought needed to improve the program. The same was true of the reports submitted by the school administrators.

Precision and Utility of Situation Analysis

The precision and utility of the influences identified in chapter three, "Problem Situations and Context," were reviewed. The process of looking back and relating these factors to what is known after practicum implementation has helped to substantiate the process and direction of the study. The policies and procedures which were in use prior to this study provided a valuable base upon which to build. Since there were few norms of behavior, traditions, or values, these were not strong factors in the study. The excessive reliance on the Regional Director (the practicum manager) to direct the program and answer all questions proved to be true. As previously stated, the importance of the

chairperson's role was confirmed by the literature and, therefore, became a focal point of the study.

Most of the helpful influences identified in chapter three proved to be true. The TEPSAC commissioners were most interested in the study and all were quite willing to supply the practicum manager with materials and information about their programs. It was interesting to note, however, that a few were reluctant to discuss weaknesses in their own programs with another commissioner (the practicum manager). Some, representing programs that were younger than ACSI's program, preferred to give assurances that their programs were strong and the problems were minimal. Serving as a consultant and observer on two TEPSAC accreditation visits proved to be very helpful. In Texas, the official recognition recently given to private school accrediting associations has added to the importance and timeliness of this study.

The members of the regional accreditation commission, as well as the experienced chairpersons and team members, as expected, were extremely helpful, and enthusiastically participated in the study. ACSI staff members from other regions, as well as the national commission members, were all interested in the study, but did not offer to become involved or give assistance. The support was basically limited to the sharing of forms and a conveyance of "the study is important, you have our support, keep us informed, and please share the results."

The ACSI Regional Council did not contribute to the study as originally anticipated. Due to a tight budget, this group met only once each year during

the practicum study. Also, less than half of the council members have served on an accreditation team.

The anticipated hindering influences did not materialize to a degree that the study was impaired. The one experienced chairperson who would have been the most resistant to change moved out of the region shortly after chairing the first visit of the practicum study. The anticipated resistance to change has not been evident. The practicum manager endeavored to identify those who might give some resistance and gave them leadership roles in developing the new materials. Any attempt to hold on to old ways or to employ the procedures of another regional accrediting association has dissipated.

The anticipated budget restraints were real, but steps were taken to hold extra meetings without incurring high costs. This is described in chapter three. Finances did limit the number of training sessions which could be held. (Additional training may have improved the responses on the "Team Member Questionnaire.") The lack of funds also limited the number of on-site training sessions observed by the practicum manager. The "state of the economy" also had some effect on candidate schools. Three visits were placed "on hold" due primarily to finances.

A number of unanticipated hindrances, or circumstances, developed during the study:

1. It was more difficult than expected to work with and train volunteers spread over eight states.

2. The unanticipated loss of three trained chairpersons and a number of experienced team members, due to accepting new positions in other parts of the country, meant the loss of some continuity and depth of experience. It also created an "overload" for consultants and chairpersons who had to take over when a consultant resigned.
3. The unanticipated conflicting opinions about the role of the consultant is addressed in chapter three. The passivity of some consultants creates tension between the school administrator and the consultant. The practicum manager has found that even with the detailed manual and check lists, some consultants still need "prodding." The problem is compounded when the school administrator also needs to be "pushed" to complete the self-study. Consultants need to do a better job of setting deadlines and insisting they be met.
4. On some visits it was necessary to use a disproportionate number of inexperienced team members. This was due primarily to the location or date of the visit.
5. It also became necessary to draft new team members who did not have the benefit of attending the training sessions which were held at the fall conventions.

In retrospect, the planning and solution strategies have been adequate for the focus of this study. The degree of program documentation and the amount of materials assembled and/or specifically prepared for this study was more

than originally conceived. The extra months spent in planning and preparation, prior to having received official implementation approval, were essential to the success of the study. The one planning strategy which proved to be unacceptable was the amount of time reserved for team member training. The fall convention training and the pre-visit training at the school sites were lengthened for the MARP study, but the allotted times were still too limited. The wealth of materials assembled in the manuals could not be adequately covered in the prescribed time. Plans have been made to again increase the length of these sessions. This is described in chapter seven, "Maintaining and Modifying the Project." In spite of the inadequate training times, the results, as determined by the responses on the team members questionnaire, were considerably higher than expected.

Contributions to Others of the Practicum Results

This study should be of value to any organization faced with the challenge of developing an accreditation program or of evaluating and expanding a program which already exists. The study should be of particular interest to religiously oriented organizations and to other private school associations that do not wish to pattern their programs after the large regional accrediting associations. The approximately 280 page Chairperson's Manual will be of interest to organizations who have no training program for chairpersons or team members, or who have not developed materials to guide consultants, chairpersons, team members, and school administrators through the process, giving step-by-step assistance in fulfilling their respective responsibilities.

A limitation in the use of this study is the fact that it has been designed to meet the needs and distinctives of a specific organization in a particular region of the country. The study was not intended to solve the problems of the other regional programs within ACSI, although many of the needs are similar. The study takes into account the limited resources of a relatively small and young organization, and one which does not have a large number of accreditation-wise administrators within its membership. The study was further limited by the number of member schools completing the process during the implementation period. A larger study may have yielded different results.

The practicum was enhanced by the fact that the commission members and consultant/chairpersons were deeply committed to the goal of improving and regionalizing the accreditation program, and to the development of a training program for chairpersons and team members. The study also benefited from the generosity of the leadership of other accrediting associations who so willingly shared their materials, successes and failures for the benefit of this study.

Chapter Seven

DECISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Maintaining and Modifying the Project

The success of the study along with the many program improvements which emanated from the intervention components provide a strong impetus for continuing the project. As a result of the strategies employed during the practicum study, ACSI now has a well-documented, historically accurate account of the policies, standards and procedures governing the accreditation program in the South-Central region. The program has successfully moved away from the "Middle States Model" and has developed its own distinctives. At the same time it has held to the standards for accrediting schools as established by the national commission. Through the process the regional commissioners have become less dependent upon the national commission and have given leadership to the regional program. This was accomplished by involving the commissioners in the preparation of the materials and in evaluating the results. By so doing the commissioners have accepted ownership of the study and of the resultant achievements.

Modifications in strategies are being made for the continued study. Longer training sessions are planned for both chairpersons and team members. The sessions which are held during the fall teachers' conventions will be replaced by: scheduling a full day training session on the day preceding the conventions and by hosting separate sessions for experienced and inexperienced personnel.

The new team members will assemble in the morning for orientation and basic training and will spend the afternoon in the advanced training along with the more experienced team members. The same plan will be followed for consultant/chairpersons. Kells (1980a:2) calls for more simulation, role-playing, and learn-by-doing techniques to be used in team member training sessions. The longer training sessions will allow more time for this type of activity. The afternoon advanced session will be considered as "certification training," which means the association is moving toward the goal of annually certifying all personnel for serving on accreditation visits.

The unanticipated problems and hindrances presented in chapter six will continue to be addressed and strategies will be developed. The longer training sessions will reflect these efforts as emphasis is given to constantly improving the program.

A special convention seminar is planned for school personnel, particularly the self-study coordinators and the school administrators. The goal is to provide sufficient information about the procedures, including the effective organization of staff for the self-study process to overcome the mystique or fear of beginning the accreditation proceedings. This training will also include instruction on working with the consultant/chairperson. The new ACSI Administrators Handbook will be an integral part of this seminar.

Consideration is being given to the use of video tapes for critiquing program components such as segments of the on-site training sessions, group interaction in determining major recommendations, and the oral exit report. Also

under consideration is the preparation of video training tapes which will standardize some of the training presently done by individual chairpersons.

Arnstein (1979.359) addressed the need for encouraging more diversity in schools and the ability to evaluate these programs for the purpose of accreditation without requiring adherence to absolute standards. This important concept of allowing flexibility, while still promulgating a standard of excellence, must soon be addressed by the Association. The commission has plans to study the "Goals of Excellence" program recently initiated by the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest.

Finally, maintaining the study also includes the task of attending the chairperson and/or team member training sessions presented by the state departments of education in each of the eight states in the South-Central region. A working knowledge of each state program will assist ACSI in its goal to have a program which is compatible, equal to, and hopefully stronger than the respective state programs, while still maintaining the Biblical distinctives of the ACSI program.

Follow Up Actions and Additional Applications

The foundation for a successful accreditation program having been laid, the focus must now shift from the mechanics of the program to the vital task of evaluating performance. The assignments of appraising student-teacher ratios, curriculum guides, and library books must give way to the more important responsibility of assessing student performance.

Utilizing and building upon the knowledge gained through the MARP study,

the accreditation commission must now turn its attention to the development of a new system, one which will measure excellence by examining the school's product -- its students. The accreditation team's focus must shift to examining student performance on achievement tests, college entrance examinations, and college-level performance. On a broader scale, the team members must learn to focus on how the students fare after they leave the school -- from elementary school to secondary school, and from secondary school to college or to vocational endeavors. It is interesting to note that Cohen (1974:314-319) addressed this issue fifteen years ago but seemingly little has been done. Many accrediting associations are still counting the number of books contained in the library, as is ACSI.

> ...the faculty qualifications as indicated by formal education and experience, methods of selection, retention and promotion, workloads, working conditions, salaries, and benefits unquestionably relate to the quality of instruction offered. Such faculty variables tell us little about student outcomes, however, even if we could measure and appropriately weight them. The problem is essentially, 'Does examination of institutional form, structure, and process accomplish its real objectives?' Process partly determines product, but measurement of the first may not be taken to stand for measurement of the second. (Cohen, 1974:315)
>
> ...we must begin to formulate means of examining student outcomes in relation to the institution's objectives and student-selection criteria. (Cohen, 1974:316)

The process of evaluation and accreditation is a never-ending study. Directors and commission members must be committed to the need for, and challenge of, constantly evaluating and improving the process and program.

Disseminating Practicum Benefits

Though written specifically for the accreditation program in the South-

Central region, the Chairperson's Manual, Team Member's Handbook, and Administrator's Handbook have been distributed to the regional directors in each of the seven other regional offices of ACSI. As previously stated, these have been officially adopted in two of the regions and other regional commissions are still in the process of evaluating the materials. No effort has been made by the practicum manager to nationalize the materials within the association since the thrust has been to move away from a national program in favor of regionally distinctive programs. In addition, two accrediting associations recognized by the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission now have copies of the manual, and other program directors are waiting for the practicum manager to complete the MARP study before meeting to review the ACSI program and materials. The practicum manager is willing to share the results of this study with anyone who might benefit from it.

Conclusions and Recommendations

If the practicum manager were to undertake this same study again, most of the same strategies and sequence of events would be employed. The one notable exception would be to schedule longer training sessions. Having prepared and assembled all of the training materials in advance, the practicum manager would schedule a three-day intensive training conference for consultant/chairpersons, followed by a three-day conference for team members. The training would include more role-playing and simulation of on-site accreditation visits with ample time to critique each activity. These conferences would be held in early August, immediately preceding the school year in which

the improvement strategies would be implemented. If the study were to cover a two-year period, the summer preceding the second year of implementation would have a full-day refresher course for those who attended the previous training, plus a repeat of the original sessions for all new chairpersons and team members. The practicum manager would seek special funding, perhaps a foundation grant, to underwrite the cost of the study, including travel and all other attendee expenses.

In addition, the practicum manager would plan a special conference for administrators and self-study coordinators who would be participating in the study by leading their schools through the accreditation process. Other recommended changes include shorter agendas for the commission and committee meetings, which would result in the sessions being more productive. Also, intensive work sessions would not be scheduled at the conclusion of a two-day conference when everyone is already weary from attending meetings. (This was done to save travel costs. Also, by using the weekends, the participants avoided taking additional days away from school.)

Although it is presently cost prohibitive for ACSI, directors of other associations might consider Harcleroad's advice and employ a full-time staff member whose chief responsibility is to participate in every accreditation visit, providing leadership and consistency to the process. (Harcleroad, 1976:24)

In conclusion, the execution of the study, including the related task of writing the Chairperson's Manual, proved to be a taxing and somewhat exhausting experience but also a stretching and professionally rewarding

challenge. The practicum manager has grown considerably in the knowledge about accreditation and in developing the skills necessary to manage the accreditation program.

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